

LEVITICUS -- LESSON FOUR

LEVITICUS -- LESSON FOUR: Uncleaness and Its Treatment (Chs. 11-15)

- □ I. Preliminary Observations.
 - □ A. Chs. 11-15 open a new section of the book; it deals with various kinds of uncleaness and how men may be cleansed from them.
 - □ 1. Ch. 11 differentiates clean and unclean foods, *i.e.*, which animals may be eaten and which may not be.
 - □ 2. Ch. 12 deals with the pollution associated with childbirth.
 - □ 3. Chs. 13 and 14 deal with skin and fungus diseases.
 - □ 4. Ch. 15 deals with bodily discharges.
 - □ B. These chapters look back to 10:10 and look forward to ch. 16 which describes the Day of Atonement, ordained because of the uncleaness of the Israelites. 16:16.
 - □ 1. These chapters provide background essential to understanding the significance of the day of atonement.
 - □ 2. These chapters, like the Mosaic code itself, were not universal, but were given to a particular people.
 - □ 3. They are part of the blueprint for making the people of Israel holy: "I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God; you must therefore be holy, for I am holy" (11:45).
 - □ C. Questions to be answered:
 - □ 1. Why were they given in the first place?
 - □ 2. What were they expected to achieve?
 - □ 3. Are they binding today?
 - □ 4. What, if anything, can they teach us today?
- □ II. Chapter 11 -- Unclean animals.
 - □ A. Classification.
 - □ 1. Land creatures (edible - vv. 2-3; inedible - unclean (vv. 4-8).
 - □ 2. Water creatures (edible - v. 9; inedible - detestable - vv. 10-12).
 - □ 3. Flying creatures (inedible - detestable birds - vv/ 13-19; insects - detestable - v. 20; edible - vv. 21-22; detestable - 23).
 - □ 4. Pollution by animals and its treatment (vv. 24-27).
 - □ a. Land creatures (vv. 24-28).
 - □ b. Swarming creatures (general principles - vv. 29-38; clean animals - vv. 39-40; concluding exhortation - vv. 41-45).
 - □ c. Summary (vv. 46-47).
 - □ B. Why did God decree that certain animals could be eaten while others could not be eaten?
 - □ 1. Some say the distinctions are arbitrary; their rationale is known only to God who gave them as a test of obedience.
 - □ a. This was the opinion of some rabbis.

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- □ b. It may be the conclusion to which those are driven who can find no other rationale reason.
- □ 2. The cultic explanation asserts that the unclean animals are those used in pagan worship or associated with non-Israelite deities; as a mark of their fidelity to the covenant Israel was to shun these animals entirely.
 - □ a. Favoring this explanation is its antiquity; Origen postulated this cause. *Contra Celsum*. 4:93.
 - □ b. The law's own statement of its purpose also lends it credibility; the covenant was designed to separate Israel from all the peoples and to create a holy nation (Ex. 19:5-6; cf. Lev. 11:44-45).
 - □ c. Isa. 65:4 speaks of the ungodly "who eat swine's flesh" probably as part of some Canaanite ritual.
 - □ d. Archeologists have discovered pig bones in pre-Israelite levels at Tell el-Farah (North), which suggest that the pig may have been a sacred animal.
 - □ e. Unfortunately this hypothesis explains too little of the evidence to be of real use.
 - □ 1. In general the Canaanites sacrificed the same general range of animals as Israel; why were they not declared unclean?
 - □ 2. In particular, why was the bull not prohibited since it was an important cultic animal in both Egyptian and Canaanite ritual?
- □ 3. The hygienic interpretation holds that the unclean creatures are unfit to eat because they are carriers of disease while the clean animals are relatively fit and safe to eat.
 - □ a. This explanation is adopted by many modern writers.
 - □ b. Pork can be a source of trichinosis; the coney and hare are carriers of tularemia (also known as "rabbit fever," deer-fly fever," Ohara fever," and "Francis disease,") is a serious infectious disease caused by the bacterium "Francisella tularensis." Fish without scales and fins tend to burrow in the mud and become sources of dangerous bacteria, as do the birds of prey that feed on carrion.
 - □ c. Certainly it is consistent with God's nature that he give rules that protect the health of his people, especially in a day and age when little to nothing was known about the causes of diseases.
 - □ d. However, there are good reasons to believe that these provisions were not primarily hygienic.
 - □ 1. Hygiene can only account for some of the prohibitions. Some of the clean animals are more questionable on hygienic grounds than some of the unclean animals.
 - □ a. If ancient Israel had discovered the dangers of eating pork, they might also have learned that thorough cooking averts it.
 - □ b. Among the Arabs camel flesh is regarded as a luxury, though Leviticus brands it as unclean.

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- □2. The Old Testament gives no hint that it regarded these foods as unhealthy.
 - □a. The Old Testament is not without its motive statements for some of its laws; indeed some say that is a characteristic of Old Testament laws.
 - □b. But there is never a hint that these animal foods must be avoided because they will damage health.
- □3. If hygiene is the motive, why are poisonous plants not classed as unclean?
- □4. If health were the reason for avoiding these foods in the first place, why did God later declare them to be clean in the New Testament dispensation?
- □4. The symbolic interpretation of food laws views the behavior and habits of clean animals to be living illustrations of how the righteous Israelites ought to behave, while the unclean represent sinful men.
 - □a. Some of the more fanciful suggestions (some ancient) are:
 - □1. Chewing the cud made an animal clean because it reminded men to meditate on the law.
 - □2. Sheep were clean because they reminded the ancient Israelite that the Lord was his shepherd, whereas the dirty habits of the pig spoke of the filth of iniquity.
 - □3. Others have supposed that some animals are unclean because of their associations with death or sin.
 - □4. Some later suggestions are:
 - □a. One theory that has gained ground in recent years is that the notion of holiness and cleanness was wholeness and normality.
 - □1) The priests had to be free from physical deformity (21:5-6, 17ff).
 - □2) Mixed crops, mixed clothing, and mixed marriages are incompatible with holiness (18:23; 19:19).
 - □b. From that it is argued that the same insistence on wholeness underlies the uncleaness laws in this chapter.
 - □1) The animal world is divided into three spheres -- land, water, and air.
 - □2) Each sphere has a particular mode of motion associate with it.
 - □a) Birds have twoβ wings with which to fly, two feet with which to walk.
 - □b) Fish have fins and scales with which to swim.
 - □c) Land animals have hoofs to run with.
 - □3) Clean animals are those that conform to these standard pure types (How and by whom is normalcy determined?).
 - □4) Those animals that somehow transgress the boundaries are unclean.
 - □a) Fish without fins or scales are unclean (11:10; Deut. 14:10).
 - □b) Insects that fly but which have many legs are unclean, whereas locusts that have wings and only two hopping legs are clean (Lev. 11:20-23).
 - □c) Animals with an indeterminate form of motion ("swarm") are unclean (vv. 41-44).

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- □5) This theory concludes that holiness requires that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong, and insofar as some animals do not conform, they are unclean.
- □6) While this analysis does provide an explanation for clean and unclean, it does not, for example, explain why the sheep and goats are clean while pigs are unclean.
- □7) Proponents "cure" this failure by looking at the cultural background of Israel; sheep and goats would have been the standard meat of pastoralists, while pigs and camels did not conform exactly to the norms of behavior defined by sheep and goats.
- □8) Thus they create a parallel between the holiness looked for in man and the cleanness of animals; man must conform to the norms of moral and physical perfection, and animals must conform to the standards of the animal group to which they belong.
- □b. All theories aside, it seems clear that the clean-unclean division reflects at least two things:
 - □1. It expressed an understanding of holiness, and of Israel's special status as the holy people of God.
 - □2. The division into clean(edible) and unclean (inedible) foods corresponded to the division between holy Israel and the Gentile world.
 - □3. Through this system of symbolic laws the Israelites were reminded at every meal of their redemption to be God's people.
- □c. Finally, it must be noted that the New Testament appears to regard the food laws as symbolic of the division between Jew and Gentile, and their abolition under the New Covenant is one with breaking down the middle wall of partition (Acts 10:9-16; Eph. 2:11-22).
- □C. Food laws in the New Testament.
 - □1. Matt. 15:17-20; Mark 7:14-23, esp. v. 19.
 - □2. Acts 10:9-16.
 - □3. While the O.T. food laws are no longer binding, Christians today are called to be a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people (1 Pet. 2:9).
 - □a. The O.T. laws served not only as reminders of redemption, but of moral values.
 - □b. With the law of God written on our heart (Jer. 31:32; Heb. 8:10), we ought not to need any such tangible reminders of God's will and character.
 - □c. We also have ready access to the Scripture which holds up a mirror to our conduct; let us follow James' advice to look into that perfect law, the law of liberty, and be doers of the Word (James 1:23-25).
 - □4. We do have one food law in the New Testament -- 23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;
24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

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25 In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. (1Co 11:23-28 NAS)

• □ III. UNCLEANNESS AT CHILDBIRTH -- Chapter 12

- □ A. After dealing with the uncleanness associated with animals, the law moves on to consider various bodily defilements.
 - □ 1. Ch. 12 deals with the ritual defilement that follows childbirth.
 - □ 2. Chs. 13 and 14 deal with the uncleanness caused by skin diseases.
 - □ 3. Ch. 15 deals with the uncleanness associated with reproduction, including the woman's monthly cycle.
 - □ 4. Whereas the previous chapter deals with pollution that is external to man, these chapters deal with internal sources of pollution.
- □ B. The law on childbirth is short and simple -- when a baby is born the mother is unclean for one or two weeks, as unclean as she is in her menstrual period (v. 2, cf. v. 5).
 - □ 1. This is more fully explained in 15:19-24: in the week following menstruation a woman was not only unclean in herself and unable to visit the sanctuary, but anyone or anything she touched became unclean as well.
 - □ 2. On the eighth day a boy had to be circumcised (v.3; cf. Gen 17:10ff), but the woman remained unclean in herself, though she would no longer pollute other people.
 - □ 3. She therefore had to refrain from touching anything holy, *e.g.* from eating meat from a peace offering (7:20-21), and if she was a priest's wife from eating the priestly portions to which she was entitled (22:3ff).
 - □ 4. She was also barred from going to worship (vv. 4-5).
 - □ 5. This is another illustration of the principle that the unclean must be kept separate from the holy.
- □ C. After the period of purification was over (40 days for a boy, 80 for a girl), the mother must bring a purification offering and a burnt offering (vv. 6, 8).
- □ D. Sacrifice was generally required when a person's uncleanness lasted more than seven days (cf. ch. 15).
 - □ 1. The purification offering was presented first to cleanse the sanctuary; although she had not entered the sanctuary after the child had been born, her presence in the camp had still contaminated the altar (cf. 15:31), and the blood of the purification offering cleansed it.

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- □2. Then the burnt offering was brought to secure the forgiveness of sins and to express the mother's gratitude for the birth of her child and her renewed dedication to God.
- □E. Though the ritual is straightforward, it is not easy to understand the thinking behind the law; why should a woman become unclean by bearing children (Gen. 1:28)? Why should a girl child require twice as long a period of uncleanness as a boy?
 - □1. Various answers are given by commentators.
 - □a. Some suggest that the law contains a relic of older pre-Israelite practice, which regarded the new mother as unclean.
 - □1. In view of the fact that other nations regarded the new mother taboo, this is a possible view, but it still does not explain why God chose to incorporate this into Leviticus, but did not endorse other age-old customs.
 - □2. Others suggest that women who had recently given birth to children were particularly prone to attack by demons, but there is no clear mention of demons here, and it is a risky procedure to read beliefs into a text when there is no clear evidence for them.
 - □b. The law provides a clear answer to the first question -- it is not the birth that makes the woman unclean (there is no mention of the baby's being unclean), but it is the discharge that follows childbirth that makes the woman unclean.
 - □1. Three times her blood or discharge of blood is mentioned in this law (vv. 4, 5, 7).
 - □2. Since the first phase of the discharge resembles the menstrual discharge, it is consistent for the woman to be treated as contagiously unclean as she is when she menstruates.
 - □3. Since the discharge lasts longer than a week, the woman continues to be unclean for an additional 33 or 66 days, making a total of 40 or 80 days.
 - □c. On the more fundamental question of why any discharge should make a person unclean the Bible does not give a specific answer.
 - □1. One suggestion is that since decaying corpses discharge and cause pollution, so every bodily discharge is a reminder of sin and death.
 - □2. Others say that a bleeding or discharging body lacks wholeness and is therefore unclean.
 - □a. Loss of blood can lead to death, the antithesis of normal healthy life.
 - □b. Anyone losing blood is at least in danger of becoming less than perfect and therefore unclean.
 - □c. Thus blood is at once the the most effective ritual cleanser and the most polluting substance when it is in the wrong place.
 - □3. No convincing explanation has been offered why the birth of a girl makes the mother unclean for twice as long as the birth of a boy.
 - □a. Some suggest that there may be some reflection on the relative status of the sexes in ancient Israel, as suggested by the redemption price of women being half that of men (Lev. 27:2-7).

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- □ 1) But the principle that greater pollution indicates lesser worth does not seem to be carried out in other laws.
- □ 2) A human corpse defiles more than a dead pig; a dead pig defiles more than a frog.
- □ b. One writer suggests the possibility of the newborn girl's bleeding and that this double problem of mother and daughter accounts for the double time.
- □ c. Another possibility is that this law contains an ominous note that the female would be a future subject of menstruation laws for the larger part of her adult life, which is reflected in the extra time of purification at the beginning; however, the female is not more defiling than the male because the same purification rites apply.
- □ d. Still another suggestion is that the time is doubled because two females were involved, the mother and the baby daughter.
- □ 4. Is it not sufficient to realize that the bodily process of childbirth, together with other perfectly natural bodily processes which God created, some of which are voluntary, such as copulation (individuals can abstain, but God did instruct Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply), but most of which are involuntary, such as menstruation and nocturnal emission), are very physical and earthy.
 - □ a. The essential difficulty was the discharge at birth; all such discharges prevented people from entering the sacred precincts.
 - □ b. Childbirth was part of the weakened or "dis-eased" human condition and circumstance that was incompatible with God's holy nature.
 - □ c. The Lord is so high above such things that his worshipers must take care not to confuse or mix their troubled earthly life with his holy presence.
 - □ d. Recall that we are dealing here with ritual impurity and not with sin.
 - □ e. When they moved from their sphere into his presence, there had to be an atoning and purifying process.
- □ F. Leviticus 12 and the New Testament.
 - □ 1. These rituals are mentioned in Luke 2:22-24 in connection with Mary.
 - □ 2. No such restrictions are made in the New Testament for participation in worship; the meeting place of the assembly has a different function and purpose than Israel's temple.
 - □ a. Israel's temple was an earthly shadow of the heavenly sanctuary into which Christ entered on our behalf to make atonement for us, to intercede for us, and to prepare a place for us.
 - □ b. Accordingly the only temple in the New Testament that requires purification and sanctification to enter is the one in heaven.
 - □ c. The New Testament area that corresponds to this passage is that of entering the very presence of God in heaven.

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- □ 1. It is true that Christ is with us always, but the revelation of the glory of the Lord dwelling in the sanctuary was the actual presence of the Lord and was a shadow of the heavenly sanctuary not made with hands.
- □ 2. Whoever has this hope purifies himself as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3).
- □ 3. Paul tells us that we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when our mortal shall put on immortality and our corruption shall put on incorruption (1 Cor. 15:51-54).
- □ 4. Thus, when we enter the presence of the Holy One of Israel, we shall be made whole, we shall be glorified -- no disease, no death, no births, no unclean things at all.
- □ 5. Why? Because all such things are incompatible with the presence of God
- □ IV. UNCLEAN DISEASES -- THEIR EFFECT (CHAPTER 13) AND THEIR CLEANSING (CHAPTER 14).
 - □ A. Unclean diseases and their effect - chapter 13.
 - □ 1. The Hebrew word for the skin conditions has traditionally been translated "leprosy"; however, it is doubtful than any of them corresponds to true leprosy (now called "Hansen's disease").
 - □ a. It is difficult to find an English word that covers such diverse conditions ranging from various skin diseases (such as psoriasis) to mold and mildew in houses and clothes.
 - □ b. All of the conditions covered are unclean, and may be recognized by:
 - □ 1. Discoloration of the surface (13:3, 49; 14:37);
 - □ 2. affecting part of the whole of an object, not its totality (13:9-13; 14:37, 42, 55);
 - □ 3. being more than superficial (13:3; 14:37); and
 - □ 4. actively spreading (13:7, 51; 14:44).
 - □ c. These symptoms are clearly abnormal, and by disfiguring the appearance of man, destroy the wholeness that ought to characterize the creation; thus they are declared unclean.
 - □ 2. The structure of chapter 13.
 - □ a. It has two main divisions:
 - □ 1. The diagnosis and treatment of human skin disease (vv. 2-46 - 21 different cases), and
 - □ 2. The diagnosis and treatment of "skin" diseases in clothing and similar articles (vv. 47-58 - 3 different cases).
 - □ b. The description of each case is similar, each diagnosis containing:
 - □ 1. A preliminary statement of the symptoms -- "if anyone has a burn (v. 24);
 - □ 2. A priestly inspection -- "the priest must look" (vv. 3, 10, etc.);
 - □ 3. A statement of the specific symptoms on which the priest must base his diagnosis -- "if the hair of the affected has turned white" (v. 3); and
 - □ 4. The priestly diagnosis and prescribed treatment -- "it is the affliction of a serious skin disease . . . he must declare him unclean (v. 3).
 - □ c. The declaration of "unclean" leads to the treatment prescribed in vv. 45-46.

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- □ 1. Sometimes where the initial priestly inspection proves inconclusive, the suspect may be shut up for a week and then inspected again (v. 26).
- □ 2. Another week and another priestly inspection is required in some cases (vv. 5, 33).
- □ 3. Occasionally the priestly inspection could be dispensed with (vv. 4-41).
- □ 3. The identity of "serious skins disease."
 - □ a. Modern medical opinion is agreed that the disease symptoms do not include leprosy.
 - □ b. Some believe that it is impossible to identify them; others hold that they include psoriasis, favus, and vitiligo (leucoderma); others would include eczema.
- □ 4. The purpose of identification was not for healing, but to determine the proper ritual status -- could the person continue in the sanctuary or was he unclean?
 - □ a. The holiest area, where one was closest to God, was the tabernacle; it was here that holy men, the priests worked.
 - □ b. The tabernacle was surrounded by the camp where the holy people of God lived.
 - □ c. To live outside the camp was to be cut off from the blessings of the covenant.
 - □ d. When one was declared unclean it was no wonder that he mourned; he experienced a living death -- his life as a member of God's people experiencing God's blessing came to an end.
 - □ e. As Adam and Eve suffered a living death when they were expelled from Eden, so every man who was diagnosed as unclean suffered a similar fate.
- □ 5. Serious "skin disease" in clothing (vv. 47-58).
 - □ a. The same Hebrew word is used for both body and clothing diseases -- both are abnormal surface conditions that disfigure the outside of the skin or garment.
 - □ b. Depending on the inspection, the item is shut up for a week.
 - □ 1. If the mold or mildew spreads in the article during the week the item is infected by a persistent serious skin disease, is declared unclean and must be burned.
 - □ 2. If the infection does not seem to spread during the week, the article is washed and shut up for another week; if the appearance does not change within that week the infection is corrosive and unclean and the article must be burned.
 - □ 3. If the affected patch seems to fade during the week, only the affected area has to be torn out (v. 56), though if the infection breaks out again, the whole item must be destroyed.
- □ 6. This last observation perhaps gives a clue as to why certain diseases were considered unclean and others were not.
 - □ a. Holiness in Leviticus is symbolized by wholeness -- animals must be perfect to be used in sacrifice; priests must be without physical deformity; mixtures are an abomination; men must behave in a way that expresses wholeness and integrity in their actions.

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- □ b. When a man shows visible signs of lack of wholeness in a persistent patchy skin condition, he he has to be excluded from the covenant community.
- □ c. Temporary deviations from the norm do not attract such treatment, but if the symptoms last for more than two weeks, he most go to live outside the true Israel.
- □ d. These laws on skin diseases are again eloquent testimony to the importance of purity and holiness in ancient Israel.
 - □ 1. Anyone might fall victim to these complaints and face the prospect of being cut off from his family and friends for the rest of his days.
 - □ 2. Yet it was considered so important to preserve the purity of the tabernacle and the holiness of the nation that individuals and families might be forced to suffer a good deal.
 - □ 3. Individual discomfort was not allowed to jeopardize the spiritual welfare of the nation, for God's abiding presence with his people depended on uncleaness being excluded from their midst (cf. Isa. 6:3-5).
- □ 7. Consider the following passages.
 - □ a. 2 Cor. 6:17 - 7:1.
 - □ b. Luke 14:26-27.
 - □ c. Heb. 12:10-14.
- □ B. CLEANSING OF DISEASE -- Ch. 14.
 - □ 1. The procedures described in this chapter are not curative but ritual -- the priests did nothing to cure the person
 - □ 2. The rites prescribed here are long and complicated, as befits the great change in status involved in becoming clean.
 - □ a. When someone was pronounced ritually unclean he was excluded from the covenant community.
 - □ b. When his complaint cleared up he was readmitted to a life of fellowship within the holy nation.
 - □ c. This transition from death to life is marked first by ceremonies outside the camp; readmission to full membership is then secured by offering the four main types of mandatory sacrifice -- the purification offering, the burnt offering, the reparation offering, and the cereal offering (the voluntary peace offering is missing).
 - □ 3. Rituals outside the camp (vv. 2-9).
 - □ 4. Rituals inside the court of the tabernacle (vv. 10-32).
 - □ a. The function of the sacrifices has already been discussed; only the presence of the reparation offering is unexpected in this list.
 - □ 1. Usually after a man had been declared clean after a long-term uncleaness, he simply had to offer a purification offering to cleanse the sanctuary, and a burnt offering, which brought reconciliation with God and represented a rededication of his life to God's service.
 - □ 2. The cereal offering was a pledge of allegiance.

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- □ b. But why was a reparation offering necessary?
 - □ 1. Three different situations in which a reparation offering was required are described in 5:14-26: trespass against sacred property, suspected trespass, or false oaths.
 - □ 2. It could be that the reparation offering was made because the cured individual might suspect that his disease had been caused by a trespass though he was uncertain about how he might have sinned; on a number of occasions in the OT people did develop "serious skin disease" following some sacrilegious behavior (*e.g.*, Num. 12:9ff.; 2 Kings 5:27; 2 Chr. 26:17ff.).
 - □ 3. Alternatively, it could be that the reparation offering, the basic function of which is to compensate God for loss, was thought appropriate to repay all the sacrifices, tithes, and firstfruits that the afflicted man had been unable to offer during his uncleanness.
 - □ a. Recall the most unusual feature of this sacrifice -- the application of blood to the right ear, thumb, and toe; presumably this purifies the recipient.
 - □ b. Seven days earlier a similar rite had been enacted outside the camp using the blood of birds, and this served as an initial cleansing
 - □ c. Now the blood of the sacrificial lamb was used to complete the process.
 - □ d. The blood sprinkled on the altar was also smeared on the cured man, thus indicating that he was again in contact with the grace of God.
 - □ e. This message is underlined by the next step -- oil first dedicated to God, and placed in the priest's left hand, was sprinkled seven times before the Lord, and some of it was put on the cured man's right ear, thumb, and big toe and over his head (vv. 15-17, 26-29).
 - □ f. If the blood served to unite him with the altar, the oil spoke of union between God, the priest, and the worshipper.
 - □ g. Once admitted to the full membership of the covenant, the healed man could offer the standard sacrifices expected of all Israel.
- □ 5. Infections of Houses (vv. 33-35).
 - □ a. Houses, like garments, can be affected with mold, mildew, or possibly dry rot.
 - □ 1. Tests similar to those used for flesh and garments are used.
 - □ a. The color and depth of the infection (14:37).
 - □ b. The infection is deeper than the wall surface (14:37).
 - □ 2. A similar quarantine of 7 days is imposed.
 - □ a. If the disease spreads in this period, action is taken to eradicate it (14:38-39).
 - □ b. If the disease is not cured by rebuilding the infected part of the house, the whole house must be pulled down ((14:39-45).
 - □ c. If it is cured, the ritual with the two birds is performed on behalf of the house (14:48-53), after which the house is regarded as clean and may be inhabited again (vv. 46-47).

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- □d. No real sacrifices are required, since buildings simply have to be clean, not in communion with God.
- □3. This law looks forward to the time when Israel would reside in houses in the promised land (vv. 33-34); it therefore talks not only about stone-built houses, but about the city (vv. 41, 45, 53); the earlier laws on the other hand speak of tents (14:8) and the camp (13:46; 14:3, 8).
- □C. The New Testament and "skin diseases."
 - □1. As with Leviticus, modern medical opinion is uncertain whether the Greek word *lepra* refers to true leprosy or to the "skin diseases" under consideration in Leviticus.
 - □2. Jesus healed "lepers" during his ministry (Matt. 8:2-4; 11:5; Mark 14:3; Luke 17:11-19), in contrast to the Levitical law that provided no means of physical healing.
- □ V. UNCLEAN DISCHARGES -- Ch. 15.
 - □A. The uncleanness of long-term male discharges (2-15).
 - □1. This chapter deals with discharges that come from the sexual organs, however, the discharge of this first section is only said to come from the man's flesh (vv. 2-3).
 - □a. The term comes from a common Hebrew word that has a broad range of meanings; its basic meaning is *flesh* or *meat*.
 - □b. It can also refer to the *body* as a whole, or even *man* as weak and mortal as opposed to God.
 - □c. Some suggest that this means that the male sex organ is not necessarily involved here, but that it could be something like hemorrhoids.
 - □1. This is not likely, however, because there is no mention of blood.
 - □2. More significant, v. 19 uses the same word for the woman's vagina, leading to the conclusion that vv. 2-3 use the term to refer to man's corresponding organ.
 - □d. As early as the Septuagint, the complaint in question has been identified as gonorrhoea, and most commentators accept this diagnosis.
 - □2. It is the uncleanness of the man and its consequences that are the main concern of this section.
 - □a. Not only does the man become unclean, but the people and objects that come in contact with him become unclean and thereby become sources of uncleanness to others.
 - □1. For example, any bed (vv.4-5), chair (v. 6), or saddle (v. 9) which the affected man sits or lies on becomes unclean and a source of pollution to others.
 - □2. In this regard the uncleanness here is more "infectious" than "skin diseases" or unclean animals where only the person making direct contact with the source is unclean.
 - □b. It may be transmitted by any contact with the affected man.

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- □ 1. The same word (*flesh*) is used in v. 7 of this contact, but most contend that the word as used here refers to the entire body.
- □ 2. This seems to be confirmed by v. 11 since the man's unwashed hands transmits the uncleanness, by v. 8 (spittle), and v. 12 (cooking vessels touched by an infected man must be destroyed).
- □ c. The rules here seem to imply that an affected man may continue to live at home.
 - □ 1. He is neither driven out into the wilderness like those afflicted with serious skin disease (13:45-46), nor does he have to undergo the elaborate cleansing rituals described in ch. 14.
 - □ 2. When he recovers, he simply has to wait seven days, wash, and offer the two cheapest sacrifices (v. 14; contrast 14:10-20).
 - □ 3. This suggests that uncleanness caused by discharges was viewed as less serious than that associated with skin disease.
- □ B. TRANSIENT MALE DISCHARGES - VV. 16-18.
 - □ 1. Emission of semen in intercourse (v. 18) or at other times (vv. 16-17) causes uncleanness.
 - □ 2. It is referred to at several other places in the OT (Ex. 19:15; Lev. 22:4ff.; Deut. 23:10ff.' 1 Sam. 21:5ff.; 2 Sam. 11:11).
 - □ 3. No sacrifice was required to purify a person from this kind of pollution: the man (and his wife when she was involved) had simply to wash and wait until evening (vv. 16, 18).
 - □ 4. 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.
- □ C. MENSTRUAL DISCHARGE -- VV. 19-24.
 - □ 1. The uncleanness associated with the monthly period has already been mentioned in 12:2, 5.
 - □ a. During the seven days following menstruation a woman is unclean in the same way as a man suffering from long-term discharge.
 - □ b. Anyone touching her becomes unclean for the day and must wash himself and his clothes (v. 19; cf. v. 7, 11).
 - □ c. Similarly, anything the menstrual woman lies or sits on becomes a secondary source of pollution, which will in turn pollute anyone who touches it (vv. 20-23; cf. vv. 4-10).
 - □ 2. Should a woman's period commence while she is having intercourse with her husband he becomes unclean like her.
 - □ a. His uncleanness lasts 7 days, and anything he lies on becomes a secondary source of pollution (v. 24, cf. vv. 19:23).
 - □ b. This interpretation of v. 24 is more likely than the alternative, that intercourse at any time in the seven days following menstruation leads to the man's contracting this severe type of uncleanness.

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- □ c. Sexual intercourse during a woman's period is expressly forbidden elsewhere in Leviticus (18:19, cf. Ezek. 18:6; 22:10), and those involved are liable to be "cut off" (Lev. 20:18), *i.e.*, to suffer divine punishment.
 - □ 1. There is no conflict between these regulations; rather they approach the same topic from different angles.
 - □ 2. In this chapter we are dealing with rules of impurity, in Ch. 18 with categorical prohibitions, and in ch. 20 with punishments of various sins.
- □ 3. It should be noted that though menstrual impurity is viewed as just as contagious as male discharge from his "flesh" (possibly gonorrhea; vv. 2-15), no sacrifices were required to atone for it.
 - □ a. In this respect it resembles normal seminal emission from men (vv. 16-17).
 - □ b. A period of waiting and a wash is all that is required for the person to be free from impurity.
 - □ c. Only if they fail to observe the appropriate period of waiting, or do not wash, can they be said to sin and become liable to judgment.
 - □ d. The sexual processes thus make men unclean, but that is not the same as saying they are sinful.
 - □ e. Uncleaness establishes boundaries of action, but as long as these are not transgressed no guilt is incurred.
- □ D. LONG-TERM DISCHARGES FROM WOMEN -- VV. 25-30.
 - □ 1. The problem involved is a long term discharge of blood outside the normal period of menstruation (v. 25), such as the woman mentioned in the Gospels suffered from (Mark 5:25; Luke 8:43).
 - □ 2. A number of different complaints could cause such bleeding.
 - □ 3. What is important for Leviticus is that it is an irregular discharge, like that of the male, and is therefore treated similarly.
 - □ 4. As long as it lasts, the woman herself is unclean, and makes anyone whom she touches unclean, as well as the things she sits or lies on (vv. 26-27).
 - □ 5. If her complaint clears up, she must wait seven days and then offer the minimum sacrifices, one bird for a burnt offering and one bird for a purification offering.
 - □ 6. Sacrifices are required here, because like childbirth, skin disease, and long-term male discharge, the uncleaness lasts more than a week.
- □ E. THE PURPOSE OF THESE REGULATIONS.
 - □ 1. You must separate (v. 31).
 - □ a. The verb used here occurs in this form only five other times, in Num. 6 (vv. 2, 3, 5, 6, 12) referring to the vows of the Nazarite.
 - □ b. A related form is used in Lev. 22:2.
 - □ 2. In Num. 6 the separation is "to the Lord" from wine and strong drink. In Leviticus it is a separation from their uncleaness, so that they do not die in their uncleaness by polluting God's tabernacle.
 - □ a. If they did, they not only polluted the tabernacle but were liable to death at the hands of God.

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- □ b. This had been emphasized at the giving of the law at Sinai, when the people were told to wash (Exod. 19:10) and refrain from sexual intercourse (19:15) on pain of death (vv. 12, 21, etc.).
- □ 3. Clearly the Israelite had to know when he was unclean, lest by infringing these regulations he became liable to severe penalties.
 - □ a. It was the purpose of these laws to explain the conditions that made a man unclean, so that he might avoid actions that might bring down God's wrath upon him.
 - □ b. They were given to the people so that they might avoid falling into more serious sin through ignorance of how they ought to act when unclean.
- □ 4. But why were these conditions regarded as unclean in the first place?
 - □ a. The reasons offered are many.
 - □ 1. They are hygienic.
 - □ 2. Sex was associated with demonic powers and therefore brought uncleaness.
 - □ 3. These discharges symbolize sin and death.
 - □ 4. These laws serve as a constant reminder that every man is a sinner, and sin affects his inmost thoughts and actions.
 - □ 5. They emphasized Israel's need to be holy and to differentiate the nation from the Canaanites and their customs.
 - □ b. Once more we must remember that we are dealing here with ritual uncleaness -- unfit to engage in the rituals conducted in the temple where God dwelt.
 - □ 1. Holiness was required to participate in the sacrifices and offerings.
 - □ 2. We have seen that holiness is characterized by wholeness and physical perfection.
 - □ 3. Discharges are incompatible with holiness understood as physical normality.
 - □ 4. Moreover, the human creation of life is fraught with mortality; therefore the human cycle of procreation and death must be excluded from the realm of the eternal God who creates life without suffering death.
 - □ a. Human sexuality and reproduction are not intrinsically impure.
 - □ 1) The Lord created this facet of life for perfect human beings in a perfect world (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:23-25).
 - □ 2) Made in the image of the holy God (Gen. 1:26-27), they were designed to continue and participate in the divine process of creation, thereby emulating their Creator.
 - □ 3) So God intended sexuality to be a vital component of holy life.
 - □ b. It is mortality resulting from the fall that has sullied human sexuality in the sense that various aspects of the physical processes involved in our procreation even the normal ones, underscore our mortal nature.
 - □ 1) With female reproductive potential or fulfillment comes loss of blood, which represents life.

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- □2) Accompanying male fertility is loss of semen, another "life liquid."
- □3) The only blood or life liquid permitted in the tabernacle, other than that which flowed in place in the body, was the blood of the sacrifice; all other blood was not in its normal place and could not enter the presence of God.
- □ F. APPLICATION FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT.
 - □1. Erosion of respect for God's immortal nature, which contrasts with human mortality, inevitably leads human beings to underestimate their accountability to God.
 - □2. They lose the healthy fear of God that Christ encapsulated in Matt. 10:28.
 - □3. As the immortal Source and Sustainer of life, God holds absolute power over human beings, who can and do die.
 - □4. Ezekiel 22:26-29 describes what happened to the people of Judah when they lost their respect for God's holiness:
 - 25 The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst.
 - 26 Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.
 - 27 Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain.
 - 28 And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken.
 - 29 The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice.(Eze. 22:25-29 ESV)
 - □5. While we are no longer required to literally observe the rules of Leviticus governing ritual impurities, reverence for God's holiness is as important as ever.
 - □a. How do we portray God's nature and character?
 - □b. Are we close to Leviticus or moving toward the stage described by Ezekiel?