

Leviticus 15 | Sunday June 1, 2025

The historical context of Leviticus helps us understand why the book gives the instructions it does. Israel is dwelling at Mount Sinai one year (Ex 40:17) after the Exodus. Israel had been slaves in Egypt and **God wanted to reveal Himself** and fulfill His promises to them. God started by revealing Himself to Moses at the burning bush and gave him instructions of what to tell Pharaoh and even equipped him with miracles to confirm the message. Moses and Aaron went and told the elders of Israel all that God told them. The people worshipped God for what He was promising to do for them (Ex 4:29-31). They believed Moses and Aaron and were eagerly anticipating to see all that God would do. This optimism did not last past the first confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh. Pharaoh was angry and made the Jews' lives harder by making them gather their own straw to make bricks.

Exodus 5:20-23 ESV

- (20) They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh;
- (21) and they said to them, **"The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants,** and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."
- (22) Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, **why have you done evil** to this people? Why did you ever send me?"
- (23) For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, **he has done evil to this people, and You have not delivered your people at all."**

Israel is calling on God to judge Moses for what he had done. Moses thinks God has done evil to Israel. **This shows how little they understood about God's character.** Israel does not understand God's righteous standard and Moses does not understand how holy God is. At the first obstacle the people are discouraged, and Moses wants to give up. God had not delivered His people yet, and both Israel and Moses are not sure He can. God is so gracious in His response to Moses and the people.

Exodus 6:1-9 Legacy Standard Bible

- (1) Then Yahweh said to Moses, **"Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh;** for by a strong hand he will let them go, and by a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."
- (2) God spoke further to Moses and said to him, **"I am Yahweh;**
- (3) and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, **as God Almighty, but by My name, Yahweh, I was not known to them.**
- (4) And **I also established My covenant with them,** to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned.
- (5) Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel because the Egyptians are holding them in slavery, and **I have remembered My covenant.**
- (6) Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, **'I am Yahweh,** and I will bring you out from under the hard labors of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their slavery. **I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.**
- (7) **Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God;** and **you shall know that I am Yahweh your God,** who brought you out from under the hard labors of the Egyptians.

(8) **And I will bring you to the land** which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and **I will give it to you for a possession; I am Yahweh.’”**

(9) So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, **but they did not listen to Moses on account of their weakness of spirit and hard slavery.**

God is revealing a new aspect of who He is. The name Yahweh is used in Genesis but it was not the main way that they understood who God was and related to Him. Abraham, Issac, and Jacob knew God as **EL Shaddai, God Almighty**. They knew He was sovereign and in control. Now God was going to reveal Himself as Yahweh, **the “I Am who I Am.”** The God that is always present and always existed and will always be. **He is the great covenant and promise keeper.** To reveal Himself as the present God who keeps covenant, He gives a list of promises that He is going to do for Israel. **He is going to** redeem them from Egypt and ultimately give them the promised land.

It is the promise in verse 7 that applies directly to Leviticus. He promised to make them His people and be their God **He is going to dwell in their presence. In doing so they are going to learn who He is and His holiness and who they are in their sinfulness.** When God made this promise to them, they did not listen. They did not know who He was and how to trust Him. **In Leviticus God is revealing His character, and His holiness.** He is showing how perfect He is and then in comparison how sinful we are. Chapters 11-15 reveals how sins pollution has affected us. **Sin has corrupted us to our core and corrupts the things around us.** Chapter 15 describes in detail how permeating sins corruption has become.

Leviticus 15:1-33 ESV

(1) 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.

This is an uncomfortable chapter. It deals with aspects of life that are private and we would rather not talk about. For both genders God is defining what is a normal bodily function and what is a disease. **Both make you unclean but for different periods of time and are remedied in different ways.** This chapter is not talking about all bodily discharges but is more focused. The chronic discharge described for the man is probably the sexually transmitted infection gonorrhea. For both genders when the chronic discharge is healed **a sin and burnt offering are needed for restoration.** These illnesses were not normal and for some would have been a direct result of sin. **All of these illnesses were a reminder of sins curse on the body.** Where skin ailments were harder to hide, these issues are by default more hidden and personal.

The passage is written in a Chiasm, meaning it has a repetition that mirrors itself with the main point being in the middle (ABCBA). **Chronic** discharges for men are dealt with then normal **intermittent** discharges. Then in mirrored fashion for women normal **intermittent** discharges are dealt with then **chronic. The hinge and main point is found in verse 18.**

Leviticus 15:18 ESV

(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.**

This describes a married couple engaging in God ordained intimacy. Yet both parties are unclean after. There is **no sexual immorality**, even hinted at. God is clear that sex within marriage is to be protected and honored.

Hebrews 13:4 ESV

(4) **Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled**, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

Marriage was God's idea not humanities. **It was not a result of sin** but was in the garden and part of God's perfect, whole, pure life that He wanted Adam and Eve to enjoy. **Sex was created within the context of marriage, and is part of the holy life found in God's presence.** Both are to be honored, and protected. We are not to let either become defiled by the immorality that is rampant in the world. This is what makes verse 18, the main point of the chapter, so hard to grasp. **Intimacy in marriage is honored, yet it makes the couple unclean.** Our concept of clean and unclean has to be able to apply from animals, to child birth, to skin issues, and even to God's commanded unifying act of intimacy within marriage.

The pollution and corruption that sin and its curse has brought on us makes us unclean.

This definition is able to apply in each case. Now after sin's curse, even within the holy marriage bed is a reminder of **the sin nature being passed from the father to the next generation.**

Genesis 5:1-3 ESV

(1) This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, **He made him in the likeness of God.**

(2) Male and female He created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.

(3) When Adam had lived 130 years, **he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.**

After sin's curse, when Adam and Eve had children they were born in Adam's likeness, a sinner. **Our nature as people is so corrupted that we are unclean just by a natural process of life.** Uncleanliness itself is not sin, but it is a reminder of how Holy and perfect God is and how far short we fall. Sin and its curse have infected us to this extreme degree. **It is the transferring of the sin nature that is viewed as unclean.** This command would have set Israel apart as unique from the other religions in the area that all involved the sexual act in their worship. For Israel it was not apart of worship because there was an uncleanliness associated with it. God's word holds marriage and its intimacy in honor but also points out how polluted our nature has become by sin.

Romans 7:18 ESV

(18) **For I know that nothing good dwells in me**, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

The pervasiveness of sin's curse is hard for us to understand. It is infiltrated our very nature as people. **This can be seen in the contagiousness and frequency of our uncleanness.** People can easily become unclean through touch, through normal marital relations and for women even their monthly cycle. **Uncleanliness was unavoidable.** When the uncleanliness **was not tied to**

a disease the remedy was washing with water.

Leviticus 15:11; 18; 21 ESV

(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.

(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.

(21) And whoever touches her bed **shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water** and be unclean until the evening.

Washing with water was the regular remedy for so many types of uncleanness. An offering was not needed just a cleansing with water. In some of these specifics there are practical health benefits to the warnings of what not to touch. For the world at that time, frequent baths and hand washings were not practiced, yet God insisted on them. We know today these practices have tremendous health benefits. The importance of the water goes beyond the practical benefits. Needing a constant washing with water has application for us today.

Ephesians 5:25-27 ESV

(25) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

(26) that He might sanctify her, **having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word,"**

(27) so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, **without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.**

Jesus loves and cherishes the church. One of the ways He cares for us is to wash us with the Word. He desires to make us clean from all of the pollution of sin. He desires for His bride to be without spot or wrinkle, holy and perfect. This takes some work because Leviticus 11-15 shows how polluted by sin and its effects we are. Jesus takes his truth and uses it as the washing with water.

As sins corruption permeates us, His truth combats the polluting influence and washes us clean as believers.

Psalms 119:9 NKJV

(9) How can a young man **cleanse his way?** By taking heed **according to Your word.**

The Word of God is what helps us be cleansed. We are saved by the blood of Jesus, which is shown by the presentation of blood in the sin offering. **These regular washings show our need as believers to let the Word wash into our lives.** Living on this earth with its sin curse in these bodies of death we are going to become unclean and polluted. Our thinking then our living will become clouded. This is why spending time in the word of God is so important. It is our daily bath. When we live the Word it not only points out our uncleanness but offers a solution to wash it away, it provides true freedom and life.

James 1:21-25 NAS95

(21) Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, **in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.**

(22) But prove yourselves **doers of the word, and not merely hearers** who delude themselves.

(23) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man **who looks at**

his natural face in a mirror; (24) for once he has looked at himself and gone away, **he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.**

(25) But one who **looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it,** not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

In our pride we do not want to admit when we are unclean and we do not want to accept what scripture says about us. **The word exposes our dirtiness, this is what we see in the mirror, then we turn and want to forget what we saw.** We want to forget what our flesh is and how permeated by sin we are. We want to forget how weak our flesh is in helping us pursue God. We want to forget how our pride gets in the way of accepting the help we need. **We want to forget how unclean we are.** We need to look intently into the perfect Word, the Greek word literally **means to bend over and gaze at something.** When we abide in the truth of the Word we can walk in its freedom, and the life found in relationship with Jesus. It is our uncleanness that keeps us from having a close walk with Him and was so dangerous for Israel.

Leviticus 15:31 ESV

(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.”**

The Israelites could not approach the tabernacle and engage in worship if they were unclean. As we have seen this would have happened a lot. This would have been a constant problem.

Job 14:4 ESV

(4) **Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?** There is not one.

Job knew what a problem this was and knew man could not cleanse Himself. There is no person who can clean himself up enough through His own power. We are too filthy. This is what makes the next chapter the high point Leviticus. **God will give the instructions for the day of atonement.** He provided a way to clean our uncleanness and sins. Every bit of the day of atonement will point to Jesus. He is the one who can clean the unclean. He is the one who can wash us pure. He interceded for us.

Isaiah 59:15-17 ESV

(15) Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. **The LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice.**

(16) **He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then His own arm brought Him salvation,** and His righteousness upheld Him.

(17) He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped Himself in zeal as a cloak.

We are corrupted at our core and **there was no one who was able to intercede on our behalf.** Leviticus 11-15 would be extremely dark without the amazing truth that **Jesus was willing to intercede for us.** He was willing to be the blood payment to accomplish our salvation. Now He wants to wash us in His word to cleanse us daily. Let us not take the Word for granted but let Him use it to wash off all the pollution that clings to us.