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Ritual Uncleaness Through Contact

11: 24-40

Ritual uncleaness through contact DIG: What did those mitzvot have to do with the Tabernacle/Temple and its sacrifices? In what ways could a person become ritually unclean? How long would a person be ritually unclean? What was the basic purpose of the mitzvot?

REFLECT: Why do you think God set the dietary mitzvot primarily about holiness regarding the Tabernacle? Why could only people who were set-apart and holy have anything to do with the Tabernacle? What about believers today? Must they eat kosher or is it a choice?

Ritual impurity is the biblical concept that a person can be in a state which, according to the Torah, prevents the person from having any contact with the Tabernacle or Temple and its sacrifices. God was in the process of teaching His people a critical spiritual reality (to see link click [Bk](#) - Ritually Clean and Unclean Animals).

The Torah now interrupts itself and begins a new discussion aside from dietary prohibitions, and discusses **ritual uncleaness** through the contact of **the carcasses** of some ritually **unclean animals**. That meant that by handling a **dead, ritually unclean animal** that had died by any means other than being ritually slaughtered, a person became **ritually unclean**. Meaning, they could not have any contact with the Tabernacle or the Temple and their sacrifices. Insects did not fall into this category. Only **the animals** discussed here can communicate **ritual uncleaness**, and **they** do so only when **dead**.



Uncleanness through contact (11:24-28): The following will make a person ritually unclean; whoever touches the carcass of these animals translates ritual uncleanness. The remedy was that the person needed to **be immersed in a mikvah seen here, and as a result, would be ritually unclean until evening. Then they would be ritually “clean” and could access the Tabernacle or the Temple.** In addition, whoever picked up any part of the carcass was to wash his clothes for purification and be ritually unclean until evening (11:24-25). The same person could not eat of the sacrifices or, in the case of the priests, handle the holy things until sunset after immersion. Every animal that has a separate but incompletely divided hoof or that doesn’t chew the cud is ritually unclean for you; anyone who touches them will become ritually unclean. Whatever goes on its paws, among all animals that go on all fours, is ritually unclean for you; whoever touches its carcass will be ritually unclean until evening; and whoever picks up its carcass is to wash his clothes and be ritually unclean until evening - these are ritually unclean for you (11:26-28).¹⁷¹

Dear Heavenly Father, Praise You that You are our cleansing. You are not a bath that wears off; but You are an inner cleansing from the defilement of sin. Just as looking into a body of water and admiring it, can never cleanse anyone: not only that, but merely admiring how wonderful You are cannot cleanse anyone. The covenant of love is signed with our heart of love and opens the door to becoming a new creation. Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (Second Corinthians 5:17). There is adoption into God’s family, redemption by Messiah’s blood (Ephesians 1:4-7) and receiving of Yeshua’s righteousness. He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second

*Corinthians 5:21). Thank **You** so much for being such an awesome and **holy God** - our **Father!** In **Messiah's holy Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Objects and food that can become ritually unclean (11:29-38): For those living in the Dispensation of Torah (see the commentary on [Exodus Da](#) - **The Dispensation of Torah**), it was very practical and gave mitzvot on things from everyday life. It goes on to list several types of **animals** whose **carcasses** transmit ritual **impurity**. It is mostly a list of rodents and lizards - the type of thing that people might encounter in their pantry. It turns out that anything that one of those **ritually unclean animals** touched or fell into could also be rendered **ritually unclean**. **The following are ritually unclean for you among the small creatures that swarm on the ground: the weasel, the mouse, the various kinds of lizards, the gecko, the land crocodile, the skink, the sand-lizard and the chameleon. They are ritually unclean crawling creatures; whoever touches them when they are dead will be ritually unclean until evening. Anything on which one of them falls when dead will become ritually unclean - wooden utensil, article of clothing, leather, sacking - any utensil used for work. The remedy: **it must be immersed in a mikvah, and it will be ritually unclean until evening; then it will be ritually clean (11:29-32).****

But a **clay cooking pot** or an oven in which a dead **animal** is discovered cannot be cleansed, so it had to be destroyed. **If one of them falls into a clay pot, whatever is in it will become ritually unclean, and you are to break the pot. Any food permitted to be eaten that water from such a vessel gets on will become ritually unclean, and any permitted liquid in such a vessel will become ritually unclean. Everything on which any carcass-part of theirs falls will become ritually unclean, whether oven or stove; it is to be broken in pieces - they are ritually unclean and will be ritually unclean for you; although a spring or cistern for collecting water remains clean. But anyone who touches one of their carcasses will become ritually unclean. If any carcass-part of theirs falls on any kind of seed to be sown, it is ritually clean; but if water is put on the seed and a carcass-part of theirs falls on it, it is ritually unclean for you (11:33-38).** In short, we learn that ordinary objects and kosher food can be rendered ritually **unclean** by contact with **the carcasses** of **ritually unclean** rodents or lizards. **Such uncleanness was not relevant outside of a Tabernacle/Temple context.**¹⁷² **Therefore, without the Temple today, these mitzvot are moot.**

Clean animals could make a person ritually unclean also (11:39-40): Even **the carcasses** of kosher **animals** could make an Israelite **ritually unclean** if **the animal** did not die by ritual slaughtering. If a **ritually clean animal** died naturally or by some means

other than ritual butchering, **the carcass** was considered to be contaminating, transferring **ritual uncleaness**. If an animal of a kind that you are permitted to eat dies, whoever touches its carcass will be ritually unclean until evening. A person who eats meat from its carcass or carries its carcass is to **wash his clothes** for purification; he will ritually be unclean until evening (11:39-40). The person who handled **it** would require an immersion in a mitkvah and would be **ritually unclean until evening**. Again, such **ritual uncleaness** is only relevant when one desired to worship at the Tabernacle or the Temple, or offer any one of the sacrifices.¹⁷³ **In the final analysis, today Messianic Jews and Gentiles have the freedom in Messiah to choose whether they want to eat kosher or not** (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Bm** - **The Weaker Brother or Sister**).

So what are we to make of these mitzvot for Jewish and Gentile Messianic believers today? **Moshe** gave them so that **the Israelites** would be set-apart and **holy**. That begs the question, how are you set-apart and **holy** to **God** today? How are you doing with that? How would you rate yourself? Is there something that has become a habit that you need to stop doing? Are there things you need to add? **God** wants to be first in your life.