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Ritual Uncleanness Through Contact
11: 24-40

Ritual uncleanness 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 uncleanness** 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**. However, a priest could handle and slaughter a ritually unclean animal under specific circumstances. If a person dedicated an unclean animal to God (which could not be sacrificed), they had to bring it before the priest, who would assess its value, and the owner could then buy it back by adding twenty-percent to that value. Unclean animals were not allowed to be eaten or used as a burnt offering on the burnt offering. 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 uncleanness**, 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 **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 **anima**l 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 uncleanness**. **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 be 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 uncleanness** 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.