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# Appendix 8d: The Purification Laws — Why They Cannot Be Kept Without the Temple

This page is part of a series exploring the laws of God that could be obeyed only when the Temple was present in Jerusalem.

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The Torah contains detailed laws of ritual purity and impurity. These commandments were never abolished. Jesus never canceled them. Yet God removed the Temple, the altar, the priesthood, and **His manifested dwelling** from among the nation in response to Israel's unfaithfulness. Because of that removal, the purification commandments cannot be obeyed today.

Though we are frail creatures, God, in His love for His chosen people, established His presence among Israel for centuries (Exodus 15:17; 2 Chronicles 6:2; 1 Kings 8:12-13). Since 70 A.D., however, the Temple where His holiness was manifested and encountered **no longer exists**.

## What the Law commanded

The Law defined real legal states of clean (**טָהוֹר — tahor**) and unclean (**טָמֵא — tamei**). A person could become unclean through ordinary, unavoidable realities of human life: childbirth (Leviticus 12:2-5), menstruation and other bodily discharges (Leviticus 15:19-30), and contact with the dead (Numbers 19:11-13). These conditions were not sinful behaviors. They carried no guilt. They were just legal conditions that restricted approach to holy things.

For all of these conditions, the Law also commanded a purification process. Sometimes it was as simple as waiting until evening. Other times it required washing. And in several cases it required priestly involvement and sacrifices. The point is not that Israel "felt" unclean. The point is that **God legislated real boundaries around His holiness**.

## Why these laws existed at all

The purity system existed because **God dwelt among Israel in a defined holy space**. The Torah itself gives the reason: Israel was to be kept from uncleanness so that God's dwelling would not be defiled, and so the people would not die by approaching His holy presence in a defiled state (Leviticus 15:31; Numbers 19:13).

This means impurity laws were not lifestyle customs and not health advice. **They were sanctuary laws**. Their target was always the same: protecting God's dwelling and regulating access to it.

## The Temple was the jurisdiction, not merely the location

The sanctuary was not simply a convenient building where religious activities happened. It was the legal arena in which many purity laws had force. Impurity mattered because there was a holy space to protect, holy objects to guard, and holy service to preserve. The Temple created the legal boundary between the common and the holy, and the Law required that boundary to be maintained.

When God removed His dwelling in response to Israel's unfaithfulness, He did not abolish His Law. He removed the jurisdiction in which many purification laws could be executed. Without the dwelling, there is no lawful "approach" to regulate, and there is no holy space to keep from being defiled.

## Primary laws and containment procedures

Leviticus 15 contains many household-level details: unclean bedding, unclean seating, washing, and "unclean until evening." These details were not independent commandments aimed at building a permanent lifestyle. They were containment procedures whose sole function was to prevent impurity from reaching God's dwelling and contaminating what was holy.

That is why these procedures have no meaning as stand-alone "devotions" today. Reenacting them without the sanctuary they were designed to protect is not obedience; it is symbolic imitation. God never authorized substitutes for His system. **There is no honor to God in pretending that His holy dwelling still stands, when it was God Himself who removed it.**

## Regular menstruation

Regular menstruation is unique among the impurities in the Torah because it is predictable, unavoidable, and resolved by time alone. The woman was unclean for seven days, and anything she lay on or sat on became unclean; those who touched those

items became unclean until evening (Leviticus 15:19-23). If a man lay in the same bed with her during that time, he also became unclean for seven days (Leviticus 15:24).

This regular, time-resolved uncleanness did not require a priest, a sacrifice, or an altar. **Its legal purpose was to restrict access to holy space**. For that reason, these laws did not hinder daily life or require continual proximity to Jerusalem. The states of clean and unclean mattered because God's dwelling existed and access to it was governed by His Law. With the dwelling removed, these household purity rules no longer have a lawful application and therefore cannot be obeyed today.

**Important clarification:** the prohibition of sexual relations with a menstruating woman is a different law altogether. That command is not a purification procedure and does not depend on the Temple for its meaning or enforcement (Leviticus 18:19; 20:18). This sexual prohibition is very serious and is a distinct command that must still be obeyed today.

## Abnormal bleeding

Bleeding outside the normal menstrual cycle was classified differently and required Temple-dependent completion. The woman was unclean for the duration of the bleeding, and when it ended she had to count days and then bring offerings to the priest at the entrance of the sanctuary (Leviticus 15:25-30). This is not a "time alone" category. It is a priest-and-offering category. Therefore it cannot be obeyed today, because God removed the system required to complete it.

## Corpse impurity

Contact with the dead produced a severe form of impurity that directly threatened the sanctuary. The Torah speaks with extreme seriousness here: the unclean person who defiled the dwelling was to be cut off, and the defilement was treated as a direct offense against God's holy space (Numbers 19:13; 19:20). The prescribed means of purification depended on God-appointed instruments and a functioning sanctuary framework.

Without the Temple jurisdiction, this category cannot be lawfully resolved according to the commandment.

## What changed when God removed His dwelling

God removed the Temple, the altar, and the Levitical priesthood in judgment. With that removal, the purity system lost its legal arena. There is no holy space to protect, no lawful point of approach to regulate, and no appointed priesthood to officiate the required acts when the Law demands priestly involvement.

Therefore, none of the purification commandments can be practiced today—not because the Law ended, but because God removed the jurisdiction that gave them legal force. The Law still stands. The Temple does not.

## Why symbolic “purification” is disobedience

Some try to replace God’s system with private rituals, “spiritual” washings, or invented household reenactments. But God did not authorize substitutions. Israel was not free to improvise new versions of purification. Obedience meant doing exactly what God commanded, in the place God chose, through the servants God appointed.

When God removes the instruments of obedience, the faithful response is not imitation. The faithful response is to acknowledge what God has done, refuse inventions, and honor the commandments that cannot currently be performed.

## Conclusion

The purification laws were never abolished. They existed because God dwelt among Israel and regulated access to His holy presence. In response to Israel’s unfaithfulness, God removed His dwelling, the Temple, and the priesthood. Because of that removal, the sanctuary-based purity system cannot be obeyed today. We obey everything that can

still be obeyed, and we honor what God has made impossible by respecting His actions and refusing to replace His commandments with symbolic substitutes.