

## The impurity according to P. A theological reading

Contrary to what one might believe firmly rooted prejudices, the list of impurity factors listed in the OT is rather limited. Are, in fact, considered unclean, (1) some animal species, "leprosy," everything related to sexuality and death. Added to this human waste, which, however, are expressly presented as such that Dt 23.13 to 15 and from 4.12 to 15 Ez. The brevity of this list and therefore the very limited number of impurity factors has particularly struck Mary Douglas<sup>2</sup> who noted in particular that in the OT abroad or lower are never considered unclean by Therefore the notion of impurity is never used to build barriers between Israel and other nations, nor does it serve to separate classes. Mr. Douglas has even estimated that the system developed by the Priestly Code was ultimately to combat popular belief that farm workers immigrants and foreigners settled in Israel were unclean, and they defiled thereby the country<sup>3</sup>.

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Anyway this social function attributed to Douglas priestly laws impurity, suggests that this assumption is that P does not limit himself to regain ancestral beliefs, the first of which had no meaning may have been lost, but deliberately set these ancient taboos system in order to put at the service of a project, even also to give these taboos on new meaning. The question that we can ask is therefore: P why he has considered impure certain animal categories, the "leprosy", sexuality, and death? And, specifically, what is the theological reason that led him to make these different realities of impurity factors?

The rules for the impurity are presented by P as of divine origin. They are part of the instructions, *twrwt* given by YHWH to Moses. But unlike all other laws and instructions, these instructions are then sent to both Moses and Aaron. Almost systematic presence of Aaron to Moses' side as interlocutor of YHWH is not accidental. It is apparent, the function assigned to the priests to distinguish between the holy and the profane, between the unclean and the clean (Lev 10:10; see also Ezekiel 22,26; 44,23). Aaron is so associated with Moses not to receive, as might have been expected, the instructions for the sacrificial cult, but only those relating to that category of laws and instructions, indicating what, according to P, the major function, the most fundamental of the priesthood. This fact also shows the paramount importance P assigns to the question of pure and impure.

Instructions for different impurity factors are, curiously, on two separate sections.

The first of these sections is found in Leviticus, in Leviticus 11-15. It falls within the guidelines given by YHWH to Moses at Sinai, from the Tent of Meeting (Lev 1,1). The instructions on the various cases of impurity are here due to those relating to the ritual sacrifice (Lev 1-7), which are separated by narrative songs (Lv 8-10). They are immediately followed by the description of Myrpkh ritual in Leviticus 16, the culmination of the first part of Leviticus. This first

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section focuses on the clean and unclean animals, impurities related to sexuality and the "leprosy".

Following these instructions is in the book of Numbers and addresses of impurity produced by a human corpse. The section on the impurity has this time set in the desert, a place of death by excellence in which Israel was condemned to wander. Inserted by No. 19, it comes after the episode of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, which resulted in the death of the leaders and their supporters, then 14,700 others (No. 16 and 17), and precedes the

story of the death of Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 20). It is more specifically related to instructions sent by YHWH specifically to Aaron about the function of the priests and Levites, and especially their rights and privileges (No. 18).

Factors that P impurities reviews are in order, as follows.

#### 1. unclean animals

The first case of impurity P is approached by the unclean animals (Leviticus 11) 4. However, the former is clearly separated from the other by a specially developed conclusion unfolds in two phases. First, a first conclusion, theological, which relates specifically to the discussion of the critters, which emphasizes the sanctity requirement imposed by YHWH to his people, vv. 44-45. By its tone, this conclusion is similar to what is in v. 44, including Lv 19.2; 20,7.26 (see 21.6) and, in terms of v. 45 at Ex 29.46; Lv 19.36; 22.32 to 33; 25.38; 26.13; 15.40-41 Nb. Then the formula of traditional conclusion, introduced by *trwt t) z vv.* 46-47, found especially at the end of the presentation of different other cases of impurity in Lv 12.7; 14.54 to 57 and from 15.32 to 33 (see also Lev 13,59; 14,32). This finding enables P developed to clarify the reasons why Israel must distinguish the clean animals unclean animals, namely to demonstrate its uniqueness by

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compared to other nations. But it also allows him to immediately from the case unclean animals.

The presentation of this case is rather redundant and content of c. 11 seems somewhat diverse. The plan followed by P is not very clear. At first glance, it is believed distinguish two main parts: the first part where are reviewed the different categories of unclean animals (vv 2b-23.), And a second, which focuses on pollution resulting from contact with the corpse of the different categories of animals (vv. 24-43). However, a closer reading helps to discern superimposed on the first, another subdivision into four parts, corresponding to the four classes of living species, these four classes are themselves grouped in pairs.

There was first land animals HMHB (vv. 2b-8) and those living in water, Mymb r # \$) (vv. 9-12). About each of the first two classes of animals, P begins by giving the criteria that identify the species allowed for consumption (vv. 2b-3 and respectively v. 9) and those characterizing the prohibited species consumption (vv 4-8 respectively. - each case is illustrated with an example here - and vv. 10-12).

Then come the birds, Pw ((vv. 13-23), and critters, Cr # \$ (vv. 29-48), these two classes separated by a paragraph are listed the different criteria for identifying land animals unclean, adding a new (vv. 26-28). Each of these classes is further divided into two sub-classes. As to the birds, P distinguishes between actual birds, listing the twenty species should not be consumed (vv. 13-19), and winged insects, Pw (h Cr # \$, on all fours, all forbidden (vv. 20.23), with the exception of four species that are specifically identified in the by both criteria to recognize and name As for bugs, all prohibited for consumption (verses 21-22.). (vv 29-38.41-43; see also Lev 22.5) P begins by giving a list of eight species

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insisting at length on the impurity resulting from contact with their body (vv. 29-38). Then, after stating the consequences which result from contact with the body of an animal whose consumption is permitted (vv. 39-40), he mentions other species of critters, focusing this time on the Prohibition of consume them (vv. 41-43). It is these latter species that is attached the first conclusion (vv. 44-45).

P follows in doing an order that is at the center of living species whose natural habitat is water and sky, and at both ends, those which, like humans, move on land, concluding with

species who live close to the ground and in contact with which humans are exposed daily. This same pattern is repeated in the conclusion of v. 46, however, which brings together in one the two categories of Cr # \$ that have in common is that swarm on the earth, namely insects and critters (Gen 7:21).

Historically, since Philo of Alexandria until today, exegetes have wondered about the reasons that led to view certain species unclean. Proposed explanation attempts are many and diverse. They range from symbolic interpretations (see eg Philo, De spec leg 3100-118; Letter of Aristeas 144:... The distinction between clean and unclean animals is intended to "encourage healthy thoughts and moral amendment by the interests of justice ", see 142-166) for purely hygienic considerations, to explain that bring these forbidden in connection with the fight against idolatry or consider it arbitrary rules to test the obedience to Dieu<sup>6</sup>. The most convincing explanation, even if it can be discussed in detail, remains that advanced by Mr. Douglas: qualified impure those species belonging to hybrid classes and therefore are not fully consistent with their classe<sup>7</sup> . But all in all, it was

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rather the impression that the criteria were formulated after the event, from the list of traditional consommés<sup>8</sup> animals. This, no doubt, to provide guidance to Diaspora Jews face other food practices.

But, in fact, is there really animals that are unclean? The question may seem preposterous. Yet a closer reading of Leviticus 11 allows two sets of observations. We see, first, that the impure qualifier is specifically associated with only two classes of animals, land animals (Also, Lv 20,25, birds) and critters and Among these, only eight species distinguished by P, but that, against this qualifier is never used for other classes or categories using P about them that of Cq # \$ abominable<sup>9</sup>. And, above all, we find that, contrary to what we usually think, no living being is never explicitly described as impure, that, moreover, this term is not used more in the list Dt corresponding to 14.3 to 21, and that it is not in the rest of the OT: there

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it comes to animals / abominable foods, no unclean animals (Is 66.17; Ez 8.10; Za 9.7). It says P, and also said that the author of Deuteronomy 14 is that some species are "unclean for you" (Lev 11,4.5.6.7.8.26.27.28.29.31.35.38; Dt 14,7.8. 10.19), which effectively means, as is explicitly stated in the context that those species are prohibited for consumption (Lev 11,4.8.47; Dt 14,7.8.10.19), as are also also (Lev 11,11.13.41.42) the "abominable for you" species (Lev 11,10.11. 20/12/23). These species called "unclean for you" are not inherently unclean. He never said that contact with them makes unclean. Only their corpse impurity factor (Lv 5.2; 11,8.24-38; Dt 14.8), but as is also the body pure species (Lev 11.39 to 40). There are, in fact, that the critters be regarded overall as unclean (Lev 11,43.44; 22.5) - in Lev 11,41.42 they are qualified abominable - and it probably because of their possible contact with unclean objects, they are potential vectors of impurity. It is significant in this regard that when Ezekiel protests that he has never eaten anything impure, he cites the case of dead animals, or torn by a wild beast, or consumed outside periods of consumption (see also Ex 22:30; Lev 7.18 to 19; 17.15; 19.7; 22.8; 65.4 Is; Ez 44,31), but he does not speak of categories that would impure nature (Ezekiel 4:14). No doubt it happens that P uses the term "unclean animals" (Lev 5.2; 7.21; 20.25; 27,11.27; 18.15 Nb), but this is likely to avoid the tedious circumlocution used in the J story of the flood of "animals that are not clean" (Gen 7,2.8), a paraphrase which, moreover, is quite indicative of how the AT considers animals.

For P, as with any AT, so there's no unclean animals. All animals, without exception, are part of God's good creation (Gen 1,21.25). There are only animals that Israel has no right to

consume. As was particularly emphasized Jacob Milgrom, and after him Mr. Douglas, the restriction on the use is consistent respect for life<sup>10</sup>. As noted, not without humor, Douglas,

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... Consider that Chapter 11 was concerned primarily on the human diet was finally like to think that the laws that protect quail and pheasants during the breeding period are dietary laws to protect the purity of chasseurs<sup>11</sup>.

What therefore aim instructions on animals "unclean", that is the protection of as many animal species. But there are more. For it is not only to regulate to protect the species. The provisions imposed by God to Israel fit, in fact, between the "vegan" utopia of creation, where no species is intended as food for other living beings (Gen 1.29 to 30) and the post-flood situation where, in order to provide an outlet for violence, God permits the killing and consumption of any living being (Gen 9.2 to 4). So that by introducing a distinction between animals fit for human consumption or animals allowed for consumption, God narrows the scope of what can be consumed. While the rest of mankind may have for food of all of the animal kingdom, Israel, he will be limited to a few species. And, thereby, by its food practice, it approximates the original situation. By requiring Israel this intermediate position between the "nothing" of the origins and the "whole" of the post-flood era, God puts Israel apart. And it does so in the carrier of the utopia of creation, where all life, human and animal, is placed under the sign of God's blessing, and therefore hope the day will definitely gone all violence.

## 2. Sexuality

The case of sexuality-related impurities been two separate chapters, namely Lv 12 and 15, separated by a long development devoted to the "leprosy" 12. Given the concentric structure

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this set of isolates these cases the animals "unclean" and thus confirms the observations we have made concerning the setting apart of Lv 11.

This concentric structure also allows P to distinguish from the outset two types of impurities related to sexuality. The first is that the woman gave birth (Leviticus 12), the uniqueness compared to other cases of impurity is clearly marked by the absence of Aaron to Moses' side as interlocutor of YHWH. This impurity, specifically compared to that resulting from the rules (vv. 2.5) is related with the flow of blood that accompanies childbirth (v. 7).

The second type of impurity at length in chap. 15 is the qu'entraînent different genital discharge, bwz, bz: sex, pathological flows (vv 2b-12; see also (v 18; and see also Ex 19,15 1 S 21.5-6.). Lv 22.4; cf. 2 S 3.29) or accidental seminal losses (vv 16-17;. see Dt 23.11 to 12; 1 Sam 20:26) in humans; and in terms of women, rules, whether normal rules hdn (vv 19-24;. see also 2 S 11.4) or intervenor blood flow outside the period rules or rules beyond the normal duration bwz (vv. 25-27).

The consequences of these impurities vary from case to case. Consecutive impurity childbirth has the sole effect of prohibiting the young mother access to the sanctuary and contact with all that is holy (v. 4), in accordance with the principle that the Ag 2.13 impure contaminates the saint. By cons - and the silence of the text on this point is quite significant here - her impurity is not transmitted within the secular world and affects neither people nor objects with which it comes into contact, which also explains the absence of Aaron, whose intervention is required only in cases where it is to diagnose the impurity and where the impurity is contagious. This exception to the general rule is necessary not only to avoid the woman gave birth a total quarantine which in monogamy, would have very serious marital and family benefits. It is especially so as not to lead to considering the newborn is unclean,

which would establish an absurd equivalence between what is life, and therefore is the fruit of God's blessing and the unclean, and therefore

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contradicts God. Conversely, other genital discharge, at least where there is a sexual disease or rules, are considered especially contagious, so that more than half of Chapter 15 is devoted to various forms of contamination, direct but also indirect, resulting (vv. 4-12.19bb-24.26-27). 5,2-3 Nb (Is 30.22) even in some cases require the camp exclusion. However, the intensity of the infection varies impurity factor. If in the case of sex it affects only the two partners (v. 18), it extends, in the case of a wet dream, clothing and skins that have been soiled (v. 17). In the case of the rules, whether normal rules or a pathological form, impurity is transmitted to the bed and everything on which the woman sits (Lev 15,20-23.26-27) 13. While the uncleanness of man contaminates everything it touches Moreover, person or object (Lv 15,8.11-12).

The importance of rites required helps to prioritize these factors impurity. These rites consist of a single quarantine limited to the day associated with ablution, in the case of sex (Lev 15:18) or a nocturnal emission (Lev 15.16) in forty seven days, in the case of rules (Leviticus 15.19) or sex with a menstruating woman (Lev 15:24). They include, in other cases, the obligation to make sacrifices. The man or woman suffering from a sexual disease should undergo, once cured, forty seven days, then offer two doves, one for a t) + x, the other to a holocaust hl ((vv. 13-15.28-30). As against the puerperal woman sees hit forty forty days, if the child is a boy (vv. 2-4), and even eighty days if it is a girl (v. 5), and the required victims for sacrifice consist of a dove t) + x, but a lamb a year for a burnt offering, v. 6, the lamb can be replaced in case of poverty, through a dove, v. 8.

The man just as much as women, is impurity factor, although, due to the periodic nature of the rules, the woman is often impure man. Contrary to a commonly held stereotype, the consequences of impurity are even more important for men than for women. But it is birth which is the most serious impurity factor. This impurity,

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it should be stressed, is not the result of sin allegedly committed by the man or woman. It is significant in this regard that when sacrifice is required as a result of an impurity, whatever besides nature, sacrifice never effect, as in the case of a transgression, forgiveness, xls (Lev 4,20.26.31.35; 5,10.13), but still purification, rh +. Moreover, is considered not only impurity factor which is a medical condition, which could be interpreted as the result of divine punishment (cf. 2 S 3.29) - a conclusion which, however, n is never driven by P - but what is the human nature of procreation, which ranks first in the hierarchy of impurities of sexual origin, and rules, which are completely independent of the exercise of the will . In contrast, morally condemned sexual behaviors are never described as impure. The unclean adjective applied to adultery (. Eg 5,13.14 Nb ...) is used only in a figurative sense: adultery, as such, does not make unclean. The various sexual deviations denounced by Lv 18.6 to 23 are taxed not impure, but abominable. These are horrors twb (wt (vv. 26-27), which defile the country and are being sanctioned, as appropriate, for the killing of the guilty, their banishment, or infertility of the couple (Lv 20 10-21), no reinstatement ritual here being possible<sup>14</sup>.

So it is not because it is linked to a sin committed by man or woman's sexuality is a factor of impurity. The various factors impurity resulting from sexuality are a consequence of both normal and necessary part of human nature. They are trademarks of the human condition.

### 3. Leprosy

The section on "leprosy" (Leviticus 13-14) is placed in the center of Lv 12-15, which in itself is an indication of the seriousness attributed to impurity factor. It is also by far the most important quantitatively, this due to the lengthy devoted to the diagnosis and reintegration ritual of "lepers"

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cured. P successively examines the case of the "leprosy" human (Lv 13.2 to 46), that of "leprosy" clothing (13.47 to 59), and that of "leprosy" house (14.33 -53). Between these two categories, it details the long ritual of reintegration which must submit the "leper" after recovery (14.1 to 32).

As also the other instructions on the impurity, the instructions for the "leprosy" are given by YHWH together with Moses and Aaron (Lev 13.1; 14.33). By cons, those relating to the reintegration rituals are addressed to Moses alone (Lev 14.1).

The "leprosy" t (rc, as described by P, affects both people as objects. It is mainly characterized by the presence of greenish or reddish spots, where it is a leprosy affecting clothes or houses, spots with white hairs, in the case of "leprosy" hitting people, which also compares the appearance of the "lepers" snow (Ex 4.6; 12.10 Nb; R 2 5.27) The diagnosis of "leprosy" is pronounced by the priest, however, that if, first, that spot as a wound (gn, widening and, in the case of. a person, reveals the raw flesh, and if, secondly, the plague spreads, h & p #. The "leprosy" in the definition given P, presents itself as a mysterious disease that eats its support and spreads her uncontrollable manner, which probably explains the fear it inspires. It has nothing to do with the disease known by that name and is caused by the bacillus of Hansen. Leprosy strikes people is actually a skin disease that is similar to the psoriasis<sup>15</sup>.

P has devoted much space to the diagnosis is understandable given the stakes. These, in fact, are significant. For a garment or a house, the diagnosis of leprosy means the destruction of the contaminated object (Lev 13,52; 14,45), and, in the case of a house, without any possibility of reusing materials (Lev 14,40-42.45). In the case of a person, it has the effect not only visual discrimination of the patient, who

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must take the appearance of a person in mourning, and social isolation, the obligation to proclaim him his uncleanness (Lev 13.45), but even excluding the camp (Lev 13.46; Nb 5,2-3; see also 2 R 15.5 // 2 Ch 26,21), in order to prevent accidental contact with the "lepers" and thus the spread of the impurity by contagion.

The precautions taken testify to the extreme danger attributed to the "leprosy". Unlike impurities related to sexuality, the degree of contagion of the "leprosy" is not expressly stated. But we can get an idea from what is said of the diffusion of the impurity in the case of a leper house it defiles any object found there (Lev 14:36) and anyone entering it (Lev 14.46 to 47). Now, the only other example of an impurity being transmitted without direct contact or even mediate with the source of impurity is that the impurity caused by the presence in a tent with a human corpse (Num 19 14-15).

But the severity of the impurity resulting from the "leprosy" appears mainly to the complexity of the required ritual of "lepers" once his recovery seen by the priest. This ritual lasts for nine days and includes three phases: the first phase, outside the camp (Lev 14,3-8a), marked by a series of elimination and purification rites, after which the "lepers" cured is considered pure and may therefore back to the camp, but not allowed to enter his tent (v 8b.) a transition phase consisting of forty seven days after which the "lepers" cured will conduct further purification rites (verses 8b-9.) Finally, the phase of aggregation (vv. 10-20 // 21-31). This last phase is particularly important. It takes place at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting

in the presence of YHWH, and includes two series of rites. First a consecration ritual, performed with the blood of a lamb brought to guilt offering, # \$ M) l, and oil, a rite which, significantly, is that used for the consecration of priests (29.20-21 // Ex Lv 8,23-24.30) 16. Then the offering of two sacrifices also required at the end of the period of consecutive impurity childbirth or sexual disease, namely t) + x followed by a holocaust. But, unlike these

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other cases, the victims are here a ewe and a lamb respectively, which, however, can be replaced in case of poverty by doves, and the Holocaust is an assistant plant offering hxnM.

What is the function of these sacrifices? It is clear that these sacrifices are not simply used to cleanse the "lepers" cured, that it should come to the sanctuary before YHWH, necessarily presupposes that it is pure. The sacrificial rite here, as also in other cases of impurity, is reached at the end of the process, after a series of rites of separation. This is the latest phase before the full reintegration into the community of the one who was unclean. After that the other requirements are met (cure, quarantine, purification rites), t) + x and Holocaust have a specific function of making the effective reintegration. Like all rites of passage, they realize the two complementary phase separation and aggregation, the negative phase separation is performed by t) + x, the positive phase through the offering of holocauste<sup>17</sup>.

But where does such a complex ritual is required in the case of the "lepers" cured? You would think, at first, that this requirement results from the duration of the disease, without doubt quite long, which would otherwise also accountable to both the obligation to make reparation - M #) - to YHWH who, as owner of the people, was injured by this long exclusion<sup>18</sup>, and that of offer, in addition to the Holocaust, a present of tribute - a hxnM - to renew his subjection. The fact that this ritual was not required of Miryam after she was healed of the "leprosy" that YHWH had struck a short time, which is, at first, to confirm this interpretation. But besides that this explanation is never mentioned in the texts, an episode such as the one reported in the 5.25 to 34 Mc healing of a woman suffering twelve years of blood loss, shows that a sexual disease can, too, last very long, without however a complex ritual is required in this case.

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In fact, if the "leprosy" is regarded as a major impurity factor is, as we have often noted, because it is related with mort<sup>19</sup>. Not that the "leprosy" is a deadly disease: it is never considered as such in the AT and P clearly envisages the possibility of a cure (see also Lev 22.4). While conversely the plague is never considered impure, although the plague is highly contagious and inevitably leads to death. The combination of "leprosy" death is of a different order. As expressly stated Nb 12,12, it has the appearance of "lepers", comparable to a stillborn child in "the flesh is half eaten away" (Job 18:13).