

The Laws of One With a Flow.
By
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"A woman if she shall be one with a flow, her flow being blood from her flesh, seven days she shall be in separation and anyone who touches her shall be impure until the evening. And anything that she shall lie upon in her separation shall be impure, and anything that she shall sit upon shall be impure. And anyone who touches her bed shall launder his clothes and wash in water, and be impure until the evening. And anyone who touches any vessel that she sat upon, shall launder his clothes and wash in water, and be unclean until the evening. And if it is upon the bed, or upon the vessel that she sits upon, on him touching it, he shall be impure until the evening. And if a man lies, shall lie with her, and her separation shall be upon him, he shall be impure seven days, and any bed that he shall lie upon shall be impure."

(Lev. 15:19-24)ⁱ

Now, we notice that the word used in the Tora for "menstruating" is "flow". The word "flow" is also used for a man who has a discharge from his penis, both of these being types of "flows". By Hekkesch (analogy) whatever a woman with the "flow of a woman" renders impure so will a man with the "flow of a man" and visa versa. The difference between the two being that when a man with a "flow" becomes pure again he has to bring a sacrifice, this is similar to a woman who has a "flow" that extends sometime beyond the normal seven days of her impurity or not in the time of her menstruation (see below). Therefore, we must see what the Tora has to say about a man with a flow:

And YHWH spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, saying, Speak to the Children of Yisrael, and you shall say to them, (Any)-man, (any)-man that shall be (one with) a flow from his flesh, his flow is impure. And this shall be his impurity in his flow, (whether) his flesh runs with his flow, or his flesh is sealed-up from his flow, it is his impurity. Any bed that the one with the flow shall lie upon shall be impure, and any vessel that he sits upon shall be impure. And (any) man that touches his bed, shall launder his clothes and wash in water, and shall be impure until the evening. And the one that sits upon the vessel that the one with the flow sat upon, shall launder his clothes and wash in water, and shall be impure until the evening. And the one that touches the flesh of the one with the

flow, shall launder his clothes and wash in water, and shall be impure until the evening. And if the one with the flow shall spit on one that is pure, he shall launder his clothes and wash in water, and shall be impure until the evening. And any saddle that the one with the flow shall ride upon shall be impure. And anyone that touches anything that was under him, shall be impure until the evening, and the one that carries them shall launder his clothes and wash in water, and shall be impure until the evening. And anyone that the one with the flow shall touch, and has not rinsed his hands in water, he shall launder his clothes and wash in water, and shall be impure until the evening. And the earthen vessel that the one with the flow shall touch shall be broken, and any wooden vessel shall be rinsed in water. (Lev. 15:1-12)

Below is a summary of the laws of impurity of one with a flow:

- 1) Anyone who touches one with a flow shall launder their clothes and wash in water, and be impure until the evening.
- 2) Anything upon which the person with a flow has sat or laid upon is impure until evening.
- 3) Anyone who touches the bed or anywhere that the person with a flow has sat or laid upon shall launder their clothes and wash in water, and be impure until the evening.
- 4) If a man has sexual intercourse with a woman and while doing so she begins menstruating he becomes impure for seven days, and during those seven days, it is as if he himself has a flow as can be seen from Leviticus 15:24. However, if man and woman have sexual intercourse while she is menstruating the Tora is quite adamant about the consequences, "And a man who lies with a woman (in her) infirmity, and uncovers her nakedness, her source he has laid-naked and she has uncovered her source of her blood, and the two of them shall be cut off from among their people." (Lev. 20:18)
- 5) If anyone with a flow spits on one that is pure, he shall launder his clothes and wash in water, and shall be impure until the evening. In other words, the saliva of a person with a flow transmits *tuma*.
- 6) Any earthen vessel that one with a flow shall touch shall be broken, and any wooden vessel shall be rinsed in water.

"The earthen vessel and wooden vessel concerned are ones that are unglazed. This is because a vessel that is glazed is as if it has a wrapping covering and protecting it." (Hakham Mordecai Alfandari of blessed memory).

Leviticus 15:23 states, "And if it is upon the bed, or upon the vessel that she sits upon, on him touching it, he shall be impure until the evening." This verse cannot be referring to her bedding or chair in general, because this has already been clarified by verses 21 and 22, the "it" in this verse is therefore referring to any object placed upon the bed or chair of one with a flow. While the object is upon such a bed or chair, it will transmit *tuma* when touched. Once the object has been removed from the bed or chair, it no longer transmits *tuma* providing the one with the flow has not sat upon it. To understand this concept clearly, we need to think of the transmission of *tuma* as being along the same lines as the flow of electrical charge. When a bed or chair becomes tame because someone with a flow lay or sat upon it, it is as if that bed or chair becomes charged with *tuma*. Any object that is placed upon that bed or chair will then become a conductor of *tuma*. If the object is then removed from the bed or chair, it ceases to be a conductor of *tuma*.

Is the material from which the bedding or the chair is made relevant to whether that object becomes tame or not if one with a flow sits upon? It does not matter whether the chair or bedding that one with a flow sits upon is made of wood or plastic, the object becomes tame. Just as the Tora recognizes the difference in the levels of impurity between seminal emission on the one hand and a *zav/zava* (one with a flow male and female) including a woman menstruating on the other, so the Tora recognizes the difference between one with a flow including a woman menstruating touching an object and sitting on an object. When it comes to touching an object the transmission of impurity only seems to be limited to objects made from certain materials; these being an (Unglazed) Earthen Vessel or a wooden vessel. Garments become impure no matter what they are made from, for they are looked upon as a second skin. Therefore, any movable object (vessel) that one with a flow or a woman menstruating sits upon becomes *tame*.

As noted above if a person with a flow sits upon a chair, which chair becomes *tame* and anybody who touches the chair becomes tame until evening. Now, if a towel is placed upon a chair and a person sits upon the towel, the towel becomes *tame* and not the chair. This is because the person with the flow is in direct contact with the towel and not the chair. The chair correctly speaking is not under the person the towel is, the chair is under the towel. The towel therefore forms a barrier between the person with the flow and the chair. This is just like if one placed a glass of water on a mat that is upon a table, the glass is in contact with the mat and not the table; so if the base of the glass is wet then the mat becomes wet and not the table.

In theory when it comes to a bed the principle is the same providing the towel covers the whole area where the person with the flow is laying. In practice, there are difficulties. When a person sleeps, they intend to move about so they could roll off the towel and onto the bed itself. Therefore, it is preferable that when a person's wife is *temea* their husband simply sleeps in another room.

One may legitimately ask, does not the clothing that one with a flow wears also act as a barrier between themselves and the item they sit upon much in the same way as a towel would?

If we look at the relevant passages that deal with a person who has a flow, we will notice the following verses: "Any bed that the one with the flow shall lie upon shall be impure, and any vessel that he sits upon shall be impure." (Lev. 15:4)

"And any saddle that the one with the flow shall ride upon shall be impure. And anyone that touches anything that was under him, shall be impure until the evening." (Lev. 15:9-10)

We can assume that the above verses insinuate that the individual with the flow who sits upon a vessel is clothed and not naked. In Lev. 15:9 we see that an individual with a flow who rides upon a saddle makes that saddle tame and here we can definitely assume that the individual is riding clothed and not naked, unless they happen to be a member of voyeurs international. From this, we can conclude that our clothing become, for want of a better word, a second skin. The towel on the other hand does not become a second skin and is synonymous with a vessel that is sat upon. A towel that one with a flow uses after they have washed, as with the towel that is sat upon, also becomes *tame*. This is because bodily excretions from the person with the flow i.e. sweat; blood etc. will be transmitted to the towel.

Now, as mentioned above the Tora also regulates for a woman who has a "flow" that extends sometime beyond the normal seven days or outside of the time of her menstruation.

"And a woman if the flow of her blood flows for many days, not in the time of her separation, or if it shall flow beyond her separation, all the days of the flow of her impurity as the days of her separation she shall be, she is impure. Any bed that she lies upon all the days of her flow, as the bed of her separation it shall be for her, and any vessel that she sits upon shall be impure as in the impurity of her separation. And anyone who touches them shall be impure, and shall launder his clothes and wash in water, and shall be impure until the

evening. And if she shall be purified from her flow, she shall number for herself seven days, and afterwards she becomes pure. And on the eighth day she shall take for herself two doves or two young pigeons, and she brings them to the Kohen [priest], to the opening of the Tent of Appointed Times. And the Kohen [priest] shall make the one as a sin-offering and the (other) one as an ascent-offering, and the Kohen [priest] shall make an atonement on her (behalf) before YHWH, from the flow of her impurity. And you shall sacredly-separate the Children of Yisrael from their impurity, and they shall not die in their impurity, when they make impure my Mishkan that is among them." (Lev. 15:25-31)

Below is a summary of this type of "flow":

- 1) If a woman continues to see blood beyond the seven days or outside of the time of her menstruation, she must regard herself as being in a possible state of impurity.
- 2) If this blood continues for three days beyond the seven days or outside of the time of her menstruation she is impure.
- 3) If #2 is applicable then once the bleeding has completely stopped she must count seven days for her purification and on the eighth day, she is again pure.
- 4) The same laws as those that apply to a woman when she is menstruating also apply here.

In summary number two, I mentioned if the blood continues for three days: why three days? The Tora itself does not state three days, but many days: so how do I conclude that many days means three days? If this type of "flow" would render a woman impure after bleeding had occurred for only one day then the Tora would have stated day in the singular, or if it became actual after two days of bleeding the word day would be written in the dual form, but it is not it is written in the plural. I therefore view three days as being the minimum representation of many days.

Commonly Asked Questions

Query:

I am wondering about our wedding night. She is a virgin and I'm not sure if there will be any blood from our first time together. I read in an orthodox teaching that they do not do honeymoons because they consider the wife to be niddah after the first intercourse even if there is no blood. We are planning a honeymoon and planned it so she won't be niddah during this time, but if there happens to be blood from our first time together, does this mean we cannot have sex for 7 days? From what I can tell, the Torah command is referring to a flow of blood that happens for other reasons and not referring to the blood from the first intercourse (if that happens, I've heard many times it doesn't).

Hakham's Response;

First, not every virgin has a complete hymen. Many things can rupture the hymen other than intercourse, for instance certain sports such as gymnastics, horse riding etc as well as modern sanitary applications such as tampons etc. As you know, there are many rulings in Rabbanite Judaism that are not only superfluous but also contradict the Tora. The Tora states that there are two circumstances, and only two, in which a woman becomes impure if she sees blood from her vagina i) at the time of her regular menstrual cycle ii) and when she sees a FLOW of blood for MANY days not at the time of her menstrual cycle. Just because the blood has emanated from the vagina does not mean that it has to fall under one of the two circumstances mentioned above. When the hymen is ruptured through sexual intercourse and as a result there is bleeding, this blood does not fall under the category of either circumstance mentioned above; this blood is the blood of a wound no different from the blood that comes from a cut finger.
