

## Unclean Impure Woman

Jewish laws and regulations concerning menstruating women are extremely restrictive. The Old Testament considers any menstruating woman as unclean and impure. Moreover, her impurity "infects" others as well. Anyone or anything she touches becomes unclean for a day:

*"When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. Whoever touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whoever touches anything she sits on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, he will be unclean till evening"* (Lev. 15:19-23).

Due to her "contaminating" nature, a menstruating woman was sometimes "banished" in order to avoid any possibility of any contact with her. She was sent to a special house called "the house of uncleanness" for the whole period of her impurity.<sup>1</sup>

The Talmud considers a menstruating woman "fatal" even without any physical contact:

*"Our Rabbis taught: ... if a menstruating woman passes between two (men), if it is at the beginning of her menses she will slay one of them, and if it is at the end of her menses she will cause strife between them"* (b.Pes. 111a.)

Furthermore, the husband of a menstruating woman was forbidden to enter the synagogue if he had been made unclean by her even by the dust under her feet. A priest whose wife, daughter, or mother was menstruating could not recite priestly blessing in the synagogue<sup>2</sup>. No wonder many Jewish women still refer to menstruation as "the curse."<sup>3</sup>

Islam does not consider a menstruating woman to possess any kind of "contagious uncleanness." She is neither "untouchable" nor "cursed."

She practises her normal life with only one restriction: a married couple is not allowed to have sexual

intercourse during the period of menstruation. Any other physical contact between them is permissible. A menstruating woman is exempted from some rituals such as daily prayers and fasting during her period.

[1.](#) Swinder, op. cit., p. 137.

[2.](#) Swinder, op. cit., p. 138.

[3.](#) Sally Priesand, Judaism and the New Woman (New York; Berham House Inc., 1975) p. 24.

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