

PURITY

THAT YOU MAY DISTINGUISH BETWEEN HOLY AND UNHOLY AND BETWEEN CLEAN AND UNCLEAN.

I've studied in the past about clean and unclean foods - what we can and cannot eat and the health benefits of a Biblical diet. Also about how those things are still relevant and not something done away with in New Testament Christianity. But lately I've been thinking about these things in a very different way. I've been more concerned with the *why* of it all, and not just with food, but also with the many other things that are mentioned as clean and unclean. What are the patterns to follow when the law doesn't detail that particular situation? How can we recognize what is clean and unclean on our own? And most importantly, *why* are certain things deemed unclean, and how did they become that way? Going through this, it has become apparent that the concept of clean and unclean and holy and unholy are central to everything – to the entire plan of salvation.

The passage that really got me thinking about these things is Leviticus 10:8-11

8 Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying: 9 "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. [It shall be] a statute forever throughout your generations, 10 **that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, 11 and that you may teach the children of Israel** all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses."

Why do I care about this verse so much? After all, it was only talking to Aaron and his sons, not to us, right? Well, who are we? If we are to believe that we are a holy nation of kings and priests, as we are told (Rev. 5:10), then we are those sons. This *is* written for us, and we need to know how to distinguish these things. It didn't occur to me until I read this that we could have the ability to make these distinctions on our own. That meant that it was not just about following a list because God said so. There must be patterns to follow to enable us to distinguish righteously, and also to then go and teach how to do that to others.

So in order to understand this a bit better, the first thing to do is to define our terms, so we know what we are talking about. I'll start with "Clean." It is Strong's 2889, *tahowr*; "Pure (in a physical, chemical, ceremonial or moral sense): - Clean, fair, pure(-ness)." Gesenius' Lexicon says, "pure, specially (a) clear, opposed to filthy (as to a garment), Zechariah 3:5 – (b) unmixed, unalloyed, e.g. as of gold, Exodus 25:11. (c) in a Levitical sense, as opposed to unclean, polluted, hence applied to animals used in food (d) in a moral sense – 'a pure heart.'"

Unclean is Strong's 2930, *tame'*; "foul in a religious sense – defiled, infamous, polluted(-tion), unclean" with Gesenius using the word "impure" as its first translation. It seems to me that "pure/impure" would be a better translation than "clean/unclean" based on our modern definitions of cleanliness and purity. I'll get more into why I think so later.

“Holy” is Strong’s 6944, *qodesh*; “a sacred place or thing; rarely abstractly-sanctity;-consecrated (thing), dedicated (thing), hallowed (thing), holiness, holy, saint, sanctuary.”

Unholy is 2490, *chol*; “properly, exposed; hence, profane: - common, profane (place), unholy.” So another way to think about holy and unholy in the above passage would be consecrated and common.

The other word that I think it is important to define is “distinguish,” because that is what we need to learn how to do. It is Strong’s 914, *badal*; “to divide (various senses lit. or fig. separate, distinguish, differ, select, etc): -(make, put) difference, divide (asunder), (make) separate (self, -ation), sever (out) x utterly. Gesenius says, “(1) *to separate, to disjoin...* as two places by a veil, fence, wall. ...Gen. 1:6, things previously mixed together. (2) Figuratively applied to the mind, *to separate, to distinguish* diverse things...(3) *to separate* from the rest, *to select* out of them, in a good sense...(4) *to separate, to shut out*, as a mixed multitude from a people;” It is the same word that is used in Genesis when the light was divided [*separated or distinguished*] from the darkness and when the waters were divided from the waters. In Leviticus 10, distinguish is not a bad translation, but it needs to also carry the sense of taking action when something is distinguished, so that it is not just noticing the difference between two things, but actually separating them from each other based on that distinction, so I like the word separate better, as it transmits the action that needs to go with it.

To retranslate verse 10, we could say, “that you may separate the consecrated from the common, and the pure from the impure.” So how do we do that? We follow the examples given in the Word of God. And there are many, many of them - more than I can go through today. But we’ll hit some that I find most helpful. We’ll come back to the example of Aaron and the priesthood later, but for now I want to talk of other examples.

There are, of course, the examples of clean and unclean foods, but also of whom we may and may not marry and with whom we may have sexual relations; how we are to offer sacrifices; how to purify after childbirth; how to cleanse lepers, clothing, mold, sores, discharges, etc. There are rules for not mixing fibers in clothing, not mixing among nations, and not boiling a kid in its mother’s milk. What do all these archaic laws have in common? They are all rules that do not have among them an innate “moral” sense, which is why modern society has done away with all of them. We don’t get it. You may argue the marriage and sexual issues as being moral, but morality is something that is more universal and society’s reason for abandoning traditional values is simply that if doing as you like does not harm anyone, then it is not immoral. They certainly cannot see any moral sense in those laws. And I agree. It really is not so much immoral to transgress those laws as it is impure. If we look at murder or adultery, most any society throughout history would be able to say they are immoral actions. But if you talk of eating pork or having a leprosy sore, or even of having a consensual homosexual relationship between two unmarried adults, you will find that these same societies are not all in agreement with each other. It is because those things are not moral issues, they are *purity* issues. All of those laws have to do with purity – keeping things, and especially ourselves, undefiled, separated, consecrated, unmixed and holy to God, whether there is an innate morality involved or not. They are impure because they involve things that were not part of God’s original creation, of which God had said it was “very good”. He would not have said that if there were already anything unclean or impure among His creation.

What happened to change the purity of creation should be obvious – sin came into the world. What made Adam and Eve’s actions a sin? We are told that sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). But did Adam and Eve even have the law back then? They did not have the law of Moses, but God certainly gave them instruction! At that time there was only one rule – don’t eat of the tree in the center of the Garden. One rule. One commandment. One law. Very simple! So what did they do? Chomp!...Hello, why are we naked?

But how do we get from that first sin to pork being unclean to eat and a woman’s menstrual cycle being unclean? Where did such rules come from, and should we know an impure or unclean thing when we see it if it is not specifically mentioned as such in the Bible? To find these answers we need to turn to Genesis 3:14-19, Yehovah’s curses that were the result of Adam and Eve’s sin.

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

16 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. 22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"-- 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

We need to be able to look at what happened there from both an overall big picture and in detail. Overall there was a major change taking place in the very nature of creation. There was nothing living that was not affected. Verse 22 says that man would now know good from evil, just like They (the Elohiym) do. “Know” there is a primitive root word, Strong’s 3045, yada. It is used in a great variety of senses, mainly meaning “(a) to know, learn how to know (b) to perceive (c) to perceive and see, find out and discern (d) to discriminate, distinguish (e) to know by experience (f) to recognize, admit, acknowledge, confess (g) to consider.” - Blue Letter Bible. They would not just know good and evil by having some idea what good and evil mean. They would experience them in order to perceive and distinguish the difference. Before this, they had no experience with evil. Had they obeyed God, even though they had been tempted by Satan, who was evil, they would have simply repelled him without knowing what they were repelling, going on to live the “good” life. This new knowledge meant that they now had a responsibility to make distinctions between what was good and what was evil. How were **they** to make that distinction? They still didn’t have Moses law with the lists of clean and unclean, but they knew what things were like beforehand and lived through a very dramatic change. They saw the

separations being made between the things that remained as they were and those things that were changed.

I need to take some time here to clear up something that has confused me until very recently. When I first started writing this paper I was convinced that death was the main change that came in with sin – that men and animals both shared the possibility of living forever, and having that taken away was an integral part of the changes that happened during the curses. But on closer investigation, I no longer find that to be the case. If we look at Genesis 1:29-30 we find this, “See, I have given you every herb *that* yields seed which *is* on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for food.” Only humans were given the fruit of the trees for food. The beasts, birds and creeping things (insects, etc.) were given only the green herbs. So the animals did not have access to the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They were already going to die at their appointed longevity, whatever that was at the time. Also, remember that Adam and Eve had not yet eaten of the tree of life yet either, so death was a possibility for them all along at the point they sinned. They could have died by accident or old age, but the thought of killing each other or an animal would not have come into their head beforehand. So death was not a new possibility. What was new with sin was the need for **intentional** taking of another’s life, be it animal or human. That was implemented in the first sacrifice, which was made by Yehovah to give skins to clothe Adam and Eve. That taking of life could be for any reason, be it sacrifice, murder, self-defense, or for food.

So moving on to what happened in the curses. The animals were separated in verses 14-15, referring to Satan, “you are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field.” I don’t think this was limited to just snakes and cows. I believe this is where all clean and unclean animals were separated.

Because killing became part of the picture, things on earth would physically be very different. Many animals were changed in their very structure to outfit them for a life of killing and surviving on meat. Cats would receive sharp teeth for tearing at flesh and new digestive systems designed to break down that flesh as well as an instinctual nature to *want* to eat meat. Some animals would continue to eat herbs, but would also hunt when given the opportunity, such as pigs. Others would not kill directly, but would rely upon the death of others for their own survival, such as vultures, some bottom dwelling sea creatures, and many of the “creeping things,” and would still have had to have a change in nature to become that way. Death may have existed before, but it’s extent and manner in which things died was very different, and the original creation did not have a way to dealing with such widespread death. Apparently with the change in nature, the avenues for death greatly increased and how it was dealt with was radically different. Disease spread quickly, fear of death caused more killing and the nature of our labors became increasingly more dangerous.

Dealing in this increased death in some manner, be it killing or cleaning up the mess, is the nature of every animal that Leviticus 11 lists as unclean. They are unclean because they are *impure*, meaning they were no longer in the form that they were originally created in. The diet of those animals that are listed as clean is mostly herbs. They are mammals that eat grass – cattle and deer. Some birds and fish apparently have the ability to eat other small animals (insects and smaller fish), but with limitations that would have been in place in the original creation and special digestive organs that cleanse such food inside. They in no circumstances rely on animals

previously killed by others, whereas many of the unclean animals do. We cannot know every detail anymore about how things were before the curse, but we can certainly know that there was a major change that we humans had and have a responsibility to understand. We do have evidence of the nature of animals before the change from reading Isaiah 11:6-8, which refers to a future time when things will again be as they once were.

6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.

I have often heard people say that the nature of animals must not have changed until after Noah's flood. They say animals would have eaten each other alive if there were both predators and prey on the ark. But to me it doesn't make sense for God to wait so long to change them, just for that one occasion. We don't know the layout of the inside of the ark, but I would guess that a hundred years was enough time to build isolated chambers for the dangerous animals on the ark. There also had to have been divine intervention just to get gather them onto the ark, whether changed or not, so, if necessary (which I don't believe it was) there easily could have been more intervention to keep them there until they were safely living in their new homes. I don't really know how that all worked out, but I don't see any need to say that there was not any predator/prey relationship on earth before the flood. In fact the evidence shows that the change must have happened long before because Noah knew the difference between clean and unclean already. He was told to bring 7 pairs of all clean animals and only 2 pairs of all unclean animals. If the animals all still had their benign pre-sin natures, separating between clean and unclean would be meaningless because they would all still be perfect.

Genesis 3:16 is the curse upon Eve, and to all women to come. "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." I understand this to mean that women were originally meant to have pain-free childbirth, and that the husband's and wife's roles used to be much more equal, meaning that before this men and women would have shared an equal status in society and with each other. They would not have shared the same household duties, as many treat equality today, but men would not have receive all of the historical honor and glory and women would not have been repressed in society. But now she would have all of these curses, and these changes became impurity within her. Leviticus 12 tells us that she is unclean as a result of childbirth for a period of time and that the time is greater if she bears a female child than if she bore a male, perhaps because men were given the greater honor as part of woman's curse. As part of the pain of childbirth being increased, she was also given a monthly menstrual cycle which would make her unclean (Leviticus 15:19-24). She would have had some sort of menstrual cycle originally, as would be necessary for conception, but it would not have included blood or cramping. Again, this is not unclean in the sense that she is dirty, she is unclean at this time because it is an impure thing, a thing that was not made in the original creation – it is a corruption as the result of sin.

Men, of course, got their own curse. Being kicked out of the garden, they would have to work very hard to make the ground bear fruit to eat. Men did not actually get a direct curse to their physical bodies, except that they would return to dust in the ground instead of

being able to eat from the tree of life. Their curse was a result of the ground itself being cursed. The plant kingdom and the earth (ground) itself would have to undergo a change as a result of sin and excess death. Many plants that were necessary for food would not grow as easily in this new soil and would need to be tended to produce fruit. Weeds would naturally take over, and many of those weeds would have new defenses like thorns. All of this would make man's duty as the one to tend the soil a great labor. Gone were the days of being able to go outside and pick your meal off of a tree without any worries about where the next meal would come from.

The Bible does not specifically name any unclean plants, but there are obvious examples in nature of plants that will kill you or make you ill (hemlock, poison oak, deadly nightshade, etc.) and that is very different from Genesis 1:29-30 that states that *every* herb and fruit that yields seed will be for food. It is clear that some are no longer given to us for food. It is one of those areas we are expected to look at the patterns we have been given to make a distinction ourselves.

Beyond the scope of things directly mentioned in these curses, all of the other laws of uncleanness and impurity can be shown to follow the pattern of things that did not exist in the original creation, be it leprosy, mold, dead bodies, or even the nature of our sexuality.

There are also things that do not directly relate to the physical changes of the curses, but nonetheless create impurity. Sin has created in man a debased mind, causing us to do things never intended, and these things are just as impure and unclean (or more so) as anything caused by the curse. In Romans 1 Paul expounds on the process of how sin changes the Godly mind to an ungodly one. It is a stunningly accurate description of where uncleanness comes from and how we should be able to recognize Godly (pure) things just by looking at the creation but how sin clouds that vision and creates an unclean heart. Verses 18-32:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown [it] to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible [attributes] are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify [Him] as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in [their] knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; [they are] whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of

God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Those words are more true today than ever.

There are things that were made pure and there are things that have been corrupted by the Genesis 3 curses. Of the things that are still pure we have the ability to corrupt on our own with sin. We need to cling to the pure and avoid corruption. To do that we need to be able to make clear distinctions in everything we see and do. Deuteronomy 30:15-20:

15 "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, 16 "in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. 17 "But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, 18 "I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong [your] days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. 19 "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, [that] I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; 20 "that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He [is] your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

Why do we need to make such distinctions in everything? Because we ourselves are being separated just like those things! We are a sanctified people – set apart by our creator to be perfect! We were born in corruption, but have been chosen to be brought back into the perfection we once had in the original creation. As a sanctified people, we are expected to make choices fitting that. We are given much instruction in doing this.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. 7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. 8 Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

Titus 2:12-14

...denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

2 Timothy 2:20-21

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

Psalms 19:7-10

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

We were created in His image, but quickly fell from perfection, yet He has made a plan to bring us back again through forgiveness and sanctification, and through His plan of salvation, so that we can again be one with Him.

Hebrews 2:11

For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

As for the plan of salvation, that is something else that did not exist prior to sin, because there was no need for it! But with death, God also created the path back to life, which is what is pictured in the annual festivals we know as the Holy Days. These were not there in the Garden of Eden because there was no need for salvation yet. I am sure that the Elohiym had this plan ready to go as a backup if and when someone screwed up, but it would not be implemented until it was needed.

Now I'd like to go back to the first example I gave about Aaron and his sons not drinking alcohol while performing service in the temple because it puzzled me for a while. Was alcohol impure? Was it not part of the original creation? If it was impure, why was it okay to drink other times? Why does Christ even command us to drink of it on Passover?

Was wine even always alcoholic? Mormons and 7th day Adventists would have us believe that it was usually grape juice in the Bible, unless the passage is talking about a negative aspect of drinking. But the facts don't bear that out. Two Hebrew words are used for wine. Strong's 3196 Yayin, means, "from an unused root meaning to effervesce; wine (as fermented); by implication, intoxication:-banqueting, wine, wine(-bibber)." Strong's 8492 Tiyrowsh means, "from 3423 in the sense of expulsion; must or fresh grape-juice (as just squeezed out; by implication (rarely) fermented wine:-(new, sweet) wine." The ISBE says that even new wine was usually alcoholic in nature, as the warm climate would immediately start the fermentation process after crushing. The context for new wine was almost always that of general abundance of the land or of the harvest, and not of individuals drinking it. In Greek the word "oinos" is used for both new and old wine, with "neos" usually preceding it when referring to new wine. The wine that is used in offering Old Testament sacrifices, as well as what was brought out by Melchizedek for Abram was yayin, most definitely alcoholic. And if there is a question of the wine Jesus served at the Passover ceremony, I would defer to the Melchizedek example, as Jesus was a priest after the order of Melchizedek. So it seems that the wine being referred to was usually alcoholic, with the possible exception of when it was specifically mentioned as new wine. It should also be mentioned that the wine they drank on a daily basis was almost always diluted with water, so rarely reached the strength of the wine we drink today. But even diluted, alcohol was certainly present.

But is alcohol impure? Unclean? It is never referred to as such in its 236 mentions in the Bible. The closest it gets to that is in the passage I quoted at the beginning, Leviticus 10:8-11, which is worth repeating here.

8 Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying: 9 "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. [It shall be] a statute forever throughout your generations, 10 "that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, 11 "and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses."

Both clean and unclean, and holy and unholy are mentioned here, but are not directly referring to the alcohol. The fermentation process was not a byproduct of death and sin. It occurred naturally from the beginning. Then why were Aaron and his sons not to drink it in the tabernacle? Even if alcohol was clean or pure, it could still cause laziness and impair judgment in making a distinction between purity and impurity. In fact that is exactly the scenario that brought about the admonition we just read! At the beginning of Leviticus 10 we were told about Nadab and Abihu (Aaron's brothers) offering profane fire to the Lord. They were devoured by fire from Yehovah for doing so!

Leviticus 16: 1-5 fills us in on the proper way for the High Priest (Nadab and Abihu were not the high priests, but priests under Aaron) to make an offering in the Holy Place, the rules of which Nadab and Abihu did not follow. They had been told earlier the rules for the offerings, but got drunk and thought they could improvise their own method of making an offering! Their punishment was immediate and thorough, and the remaining brothers (Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar) were ordered to "not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes" (Leviticus 10: 6). They were not to mourn their brothers' death. Why? Back in Exodus 24 we saw where Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, along with 70 elders were brought up to the top of Mt. Sinai to eat and drink the God of Israel upon the sea of glass, as part of the affirmation of the covenant made with all Israel. That was a special privilege given only to those 74 out of all Israel. They were the select, chosen few – the bride of Yehovah! They were given God's holy spirit at that time, as anyone chosen to be part of His family must have that spirit. What this means is that they had that spirit dwelling in them when they used poor judgment in offering fire to God. They knew better, but were drunk and did it anyway, and because they did so while the holy spirit resided in them, they blasphemed that spirit. This is the unforgivable sin that we are told of in Matthew 12:31-32. We are taught not to mourn or pray for those who are guilty of such sin. It is intentional transgression against God by those who should be in a position of teaching and setting an example. Being drunk could not be used as an excuse, for they also surely knew what drinking could do to judgment.

But this set the extreme example of the effects of being careless. Alcohol, especially used in excess as Nadab and Abihu did, and in an official capacity, should be avoided. There is a Biblical pattern of those who are holiest not partaking of it, but not because it was unclean itself. Kings are admonished to not drink alcohol in Proverbs 31:4-6 "lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted." The Nazirite as described in Numbers 6, who took a vow to be separated to God, was to have no wine or strong drink, or even any fresh grapes or raisins (raisins and grapes were used a sweetener – they were the white sugar, or junk food of the day!). Daniel and his friends did not drink alcohol while servants to Nebuchadnezzar, nor did they eat his delicacies, which were likely either unclean foods, or sugar laden (grape/raisin, or possibly date sugar, as the Nazirite also abstained). It is clear that the

reason alcohol is forbidden is not that it is unclean of itself, but that its consumption could affect good judgment. This certainly hasn't changed today!

It is critical that those whom God has chosen to be His people exercise good judgment in distinguishing between purity and impurity, cleanness and uncleanness, and holiness and unholiness. This does not mean none of us should ever drink wine or other alcohol, but we need to be careful about when it is consumed and never allow ourselves to become drunk. There are many examples of wine used in celebration, and we are told it is a good thing to spend our tithe on during His feast time, to have a joyous occasion to Him (Deuteronomy 14: 26). Yet even there, if we are to be teaching in an official capacity, it would be apparent that we not partake at that time.

Much more could be said about purity. We could go into the examples of pure gold, of not mixing fabrics, or of intermarrying, and many other things. But I hope that by now you get the idea of its importance, and why the Bible is literally filled with examples of its role to us as His sanctified people, remembering always that these physical examples are there to lead us spiritually. It is our spiritual purity that is of utmost importance - that of our hearts, which we have circumcised in order to keep them clean and pure. Let us do our part in keeping ourselves pure, for, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Amen