

# **The Little Green Book**

## **Volume II Chapter 12**

### **Purification**

There are eleven elements or procedures which are purifying, that is, which erase impurities and make bodies and objects pure again: water; earth; sun; transmutation; reduction of grape juice by two-thirds' transfer; Islam; dependence; elimination of the impure object; keeping an animal from doing so for a specific period of time; absence of the Muslim.

Here are explanations of each element:

Water is purifying if it fulfills the following four conditions; it is pure (thus are watermelon juice and rose water not purifying); it is clean; after having been used to wash something impure, it has not been taken on the odor, color, or taste of that impure thing; after such washing, the remains of excrement or other detritus have left no traces in it.

An impure dish or container must be washed three times to regain its purity; but a container which has been licked by a dog or been used to give a dog his food or drink in, before being twice washed in water, must be rubbed first with earth. If a pig has used it, the dish must be washed seven times in succession but it need not be rubbed with earth. A container or glass which has held wine, and therefore is impure, must be washed three times, but it is better to wash it seven times. An oven which has become impure for having been urinated in regains its purity after twice being filled with water enough to cover all its sides. But if it has become impure from the contact of some other matter, such as excrement, it is enough to fill it with water once, after having removed the impure matter. If a thing becomes impure through having been soiled by the urine of a milk-fed boy (less than two years old), who has not drunk sow's milk, it is enough to wash it all over one time to purify it. Yet it is wise to wash it again a second time.

If the surface of a grain of wheat or rice or a piece of soap is soiled by some impurity, it is enough to plunge it into the amount of water required for purification in order for it to be pure again, but if the impurity has penetrated beneath its surface, this measure is not enough. If one cannot be absolutely sure that the impurity has penetrated deeply into the soap, the latter remains pure. Any impure object becomes pure only when the impure matter has been completely eliminated from it, but if the odor or color of the impure matter remains that

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makes no difference. The bits of impure food that remains between one's teeth after eating the food become pure if one washes his mouth with water so that all the impure remains are washed away.

If lump sugar has been made from impure melted sugar, the lump sugar remains impure even if placed in stagnant or running water.

Earth purifies the sole of the foot or shoe soiled with impurity, if it fulfills the following three conditions: it is pure; it is dry; and there is enough of it to eliminate the impure element (blood, urine, excrement, and such) from the sole of the foot or shoe. The earth may be muddy, firm, sandy, or pebbly; it is not enough to walk on a rug, or carpet, or grass, to purify the foot or shoe, as it is also not enough to walk on asphalt or flooring.

To purify the sole of the foot or shoe soiled by an impurity, one must take at least fifteen steps, even if the impurity disappears before fifteen steps.

For those who walk on their hands or knees, taking fifteen steps is not enough to purify their palms or their knees soiled by an impurity. The same applies to canes, crutches, horseshoes, wagon wheels, and so on. If after taking the fifteen steps, small bits of excrement or other detritus remain, they must be carefully removed, but the persistence of their odor or color makes no difference. The inside of the shoe, or the part of the sole of the foot which does not touch the ground, will not be purified by walking, and this also applies to socks, unless the part of the sock covering the sole of the foot is made of leather or hide.

Sun has purifying action on impure elements such as the ground, a building, doors, windows, nails stuck into walls, if the following six conditions are fulfilled: that the impure object be moist (if it is dry, it must be moistened so the sun may dry it); that the impurity is removed before the object is exposed to the rays of the sun; that these rays are not filtered through a curtain or through clouds, for example, unless it be an extremely thin cloud; that the impure object is dried exclusively by the rays of the sun, and not by the combined effort of sun and wind; that the sun dries all of the impure part of a building at one time (the façade may not be purified first, and the other walls only later); and, finally, that there is no intermediate element, such as air, within the thickness of the wall. If the sun has dried out impure ground, but later there is reason to question whether at the time it was moist or dry, or whether its moisture disappeared exclusively through the action of the rays of the sun or because of other factors, that ground remains impure; the same applies to ground or a building about which one cannot be sure that the impurities were removed from it before it was exposed to the sun, or

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whether the rays of the sun were able to play upon it directly. If only one of the walls was exposed to the sun, the other remains impure, unless the wall is so thin that drying one also dries the other.

Transmutation is a reaction by virtue of which an impure element is so completely transformed that it becomes something pure. This is the case of impure wood which in burning becomes transformed into pure ash, or of a dog which after being buried in saline ground turns into salt; but it does not apply to impure wheat which is made into flour or bread. Wine which turns to vinegar, whether on its own or due to the addition of salt or vinegar, is pure, but vinegar resulting from wine made of grapes soiled by urine or excrement, or from wine which has been mixed with such impurities, remains impure. Vinegar made with impure grapes, raisins, or dates remains impure. There is no objection to straw or small bits of the raisins being transformed into vinegar; nor is there any objection to cucumbers or eggplants being added to the dates, raisins, or grapes before they are made into vinegar.

Reduction of grape juice by two-thirds is purifying. Boiled grape juice is not impure even before having been reduced by two-thirds, but its consumption is forbidden if it is proven that it is intoxicating, in which case the juice can be purified only when it is turned into vinegar. The juice of an unripe bunch of grapes, even if the bunch has one or two ripe grapes on it, may be consumed, on condition that it first be boiled and that the sweet taste of the grape has disappeared.

Transfer is the operation by which the blood of a human being or any other animal the blood of which spurts when its throat is cut becomes pure by being transferred into the body of an insect the blood of which does not gush and becoming absorbed into the blood of the latter. On the other hand, human blood sucked by a leech remains impure even after its transfer into the body of the leech because it does not become absorbed into the blood of the leech.

If a person crushes a mosquito on his skin and cannot determine whether the blood therefrom is the insect's or his own, this blood is pure; but if the time between the bite and the death of the mosquito is so short that no such distinction can be made, the blood is impure.

Islam. A non-Muslim man or woman who becomes a convert to Islam automatically has a pure body, and pure saliva, nasal secretions, and perspiration. As for cohort's clothing, if it has been in contact with their sweating bodies before they became converted, it remains impure.

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Dependence means the purification of one impure object being subject to the purification of another impure object. In the case of wine being turned into vinegar, the container having held the wine becomes pure once more up to the level reached by the wine turned vinegar. Thus, the piece of wood or stone on which mortuary ablutions are made, the fabric covering the genitals of the deceased, the hand of the person who has performed these ablutions, and the soap with which the corpse was washed, all become pure upon completion of the ritual.

The body of an animal or insect which was directly in contact with some impurity such as blood, or indirectly with impure water, becomes impure again as soon as the impure element is eliminated. The same holds true for the inside of a human mouth or nose. This means that if some blood runs out between one's teeth and dissolves in saliva, it is not necessary to wash one's mouth; if artificial teeth have been soiled by some impure matter, they must be taken out and washed. If bits of food remain between one's teeth and the inside of one's mouth bleeds, these bits of food are pure so long as one cannot be certain that the blood has touched them.

Keeping an animal which normally eats the excrement from doing so for a specific period of time. The urine and feces of such an animal are impure; in order for them to become pure, such animals must be kept from eating human excrement for forty days for a camel, twenty days for cattle, ten days for sheep, seven or five days for a turkey, and three days for a chicken.

Absence of the Muslim. If the clothing, kitchen utensils, or rugs belonging to a Muslim have been soiled by impure matter, and their owner is absent, they may not automatically be considered to be impure so long as one is not sure that they were not washed and purified before he left, or that they did not happen to fall into running water which purified them.

If one is certain that an object soiled by some impure matter has been purified, or if two trustworthy witnesses confirm that it has, the object becomes pure once again. This is also true of an impure object about which its owner asserts that it has been purified or that a Muslim has washed it, even if it cannot be established that he did so according to ritual.

One must not eat or drink out of any container made of pigskin or dog's hide, or any container made from the bone of any animal.

The remains of the food of dogs, pigs, and non-Muslim men and women are impure; the remains of the food of animals the flesh of which may be eaten are not impure, but it is nevertheless better to abstain therefrom.