

# Haggai 2:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

## Analysis

**Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean?** *וַיֹּאמֶר חֶגְגָּאי כִּי אָמַגְעַת טָמֵא־נֶפֶשׁ בְּכָל־אֶלְהָה הַיְתָמָא* (vayomer Chaggai im-yiga teme-nefesh bekhol-eleh hayitma)—The second scenario: someone ceremonially unclean through contact with a corpse (*טָמֵא־נֶפֶשׁ*/teme-nefesh, literally "unclean of soul/person," the most serious defilement—Numbers 19:11-22) touches food. Does uncleanness transfer? **And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean** *וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים וַיָּמָא* (vaya'anu hakohanim vayomru yitma).

The asymmetrical principle: holiness doesn't transfer easily, but defilement does. One touch from an unclean person contaminates food, making it unfit. This reflects spiritual reality—sin spreads more readily than holiness. One rotten apple spoils the barrel; one holy apple doesn't sanctify rotten ones. Paul warns, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals'" (1 Corinthians 15:33). James notes that friendship with the world makes one an enemy of God (James 4:4).

This principle exposes human optimism about sin's power. We minimize sin's contagion while overestimating holiness' automatic transfer. The law taught Israel that defilement spreads aggressively while holiness requires intentional consecration. This prepares for verse 14's devastating application.

## Historical Context

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Corpse defilement was the most severe ritual impurity, requiring seven days of purification (Numbers 19). The post-exilic community knew these regulations well—they had reinstated the sacrificial system and were familiar with purity laws. Haggai uses their theological knowledge to trap them into acknowledging a principle they would then apply to their own spiritual condition.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. How does the ease with which defilement spreads compared to holiness reveal the reality of sin's power and pervasiveness?
2. In what areas of life do you minimize sin's contagious effect or overestimate your ability to remain unaffected by compromise?
3. What does it mean to pursue holiness actively and intentionally rather than assuming righteousness transfers automatically?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיֹּאמֶר	וְ	חַגַּת	אָם	עַ	בְּמִנְאָ	נַפְשׁ	בְּכָל
<b>Then said</b>	<b>Haggai</b>	H518	<b>touch</b>	<b>If one that is unclean</b>	<b>by a dead body</b>		H3605
H559	H2292		H5060	H2931	H5315		

אָלָה	אַלְמָנָה:	וְ	יִשְׁעָנָה	וְ	בְּכָהָנָה	וְ	וַיֹּאמֶר
H428	<b>It shall be unclean</b>	H2930	<b>answered</b>	H6030	<b>And the priests</b>	H3548	<b>Then said</b>
							H559

וְ  
It shall be unclean  
H2930

