In the halakhah of the Oral Torah we deal with semen or vaginal blood that cannot carry out the purpose that by nature the one or the other realizes, which is participation in the process of procreating life. Such non-productive semen, such vaginal flow outside of the normal cycle of procreation—these violate their own innate teleology. They do so on their own, not by man's or woman's intervention. Of such violations of the natural law and the purposive definition of the media of procreation, the Israelite householder has to take heed. Man or woman cannot generate by an act of deliberation an unclean body fluid, whether genital semen or genital blood, which is deemed unclean only if it flows naturally, nor can they form by an act of will a source of uncleanness represented by the corpse or the dead creeping thing. Were we to simplify matters and say, as to what contracts uncleanness, man disposes, but as to what imparts uncleanness, nature imposes, we should not be far off the mark.

Animate sources of uncleanness are specified at Lev. 12-15: vaginal flow of the woman after child birth (Lev. 12), who for a week for a male, two weeks for a female, offspring produces vaginal blood that is a source of uncleanness (and then, thirty-three days for a male, sixty-six for a female, the vaginal flux is deemed clean), the person afflicted with the skin ailment (Lev. 13-14), the woman, called a Zabah who produces vaginal blood (classified as zob) not during her regular menstrual period (Lev. 15), and the man, called a Zab, who produces semen not via an erection (Lev. 15). Like the corpse, the Zab and Zabah and also the menstruating woman disseminate contamination in both the familiar way—through touching or being touched—and otherwise, e.g., intangible dissemination through positioning or overshadowing.

Of the animate sources of uncleanness, the person afflicted with the skin ailment is the only one for whom the sexual organs do not define the source and focus of uncleanness. But such a person proves
interstitial, since he or she is like the corpse but not wholly so. The
exegetical fulcrum of the halakhah governing animate sources of un-
cleanness is indicated, then, by the comparison of the animate to the
inanimate, persons who produce uncleanness to the corpse that pro-
duces uncleanness. The comparison of corpse-matter to flux, then,
provides a governing analogy for our interpretation of the matter,
and, as usual, the halakhah itself identifies the focus of analogical-
contrastive thinking and spells out its result. But we have gotten
ahead of our story.

The Zab or Zabah of Lev. 15 transmits uncleanness to that on
which they sit or lie, even though they do not touch the chair or bed.
So we shall wonder what is special about the bed and comparable
objects that subjects those objects to a particular kind of uncleanness,
transmitting in a quite distinctive way: using those objects for the
purpose for which they are manufactured. That classification of un-
cleanness, called midras- or pressure-uncleanness, pertains only to
objects that ordinarily are used to bear weight or pressure, that is,
beds and chairs and things analogous to them. The halakhah of
Kelim shows that objects not used for sitting or lying, e.g., pots and
pans, are not susceptible to the midras- or pressure-uncleanness trans-
mittted by a Zab or a Zabah. And that is a severe uncleanness, com-
parable to the corpse-uncleanness that affects receptacles and per-
sons, requiring a period of seven days in which the source of
uncleanness does not renew itself, on the one side, and a rite of
purification in the Temple, on the other. Accordingly, in Zabim we
deal with the animate form of uncleanness that falls into the classifica-
tion of the counterpart inanimate form, that is, zob (flux) compares
with corpse-matter, the Zab or the Zabah with the corpse. And, the
logic of the halakhah requires, the media of dissemination will prove
comparable as well.

The inanimate and the animate sources of uncleanness bear each
its own distinctive traits as well. While the former, the corpse, consti-
tutes a Father of fathers of uncleanness, turning what touches it into
a Father of uncleanness, the latter is a mere Father of uncleanness,
and what touches it is in the first remove of uncleanness. Then the
process is simple. Once the mere pressure of the Zab or Zabah has
sufficed to transmit uncleanness to something used for lying or sitting,
and the chair or bed imparts uncleanness to one who touches it, it has
rendered such a one unclean in the first remove, and then the cloth-
ing of such a person is unclean in the second remove. How further
does an animate source of uncleanness affect others in a way in which
a corpse or a dead creeping thing does not? The spit of such a person
conveys uncleanness, as much as does his touch (contact), as much as