On that same day Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hircanus taught: Job served the Holy One, Blessed Be He, only out of love, as it is stated: "Though He will slay me, still I will trust in Him" (Job 13:15). And still, the matter is even, i.e., the verse is ambiguous, as there are two possible interpretations of the verse. Was Job saying: I will await Him, expressing his yearning for God; or should the verse be interpreted as saying I will not await Him. As the word "lo" can mean either "to him" or "not," it is unclear which meaning is intended here. This dilemma is resolved elsewhere, where the verse states a clearer indication of Job’s intent: "‘Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me’ (Job 27:5). This teaches that he acted out of love.

Rabbi Yehoshua said: Who will remove the dirt from your eyes, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakka? so that you could live and see this? As you taught all your life that Job worshipped the Omniscient only out of fear, as it is stated: And that man was wholehearted and upright, and God-fearing, and shunned evil (Job 1:1); but now Yehoshua ben Hircanus, the disciple of your disciple, has taught that Job acted out of love.

GEMARA
It is stated in the mishna that just as the water evaluates whether the woman was unfaithful, so too, the water evaluates whether he committed this sin. The Gemara asks: To whom does this refer? If we say that it is referring to the husband, what did the husband do that he should be evaluated? And if you would say that if he has committed a similar iniquity8 the water evaluates his actions, this is difficult, as in a case where he has committed a similar iniquity does the water even evaluate her fidelity? But isn’t it taught in a baraita that the verse: And the man shall be clear from iniquity, and that woman shall bear her iniquity? (Numbers 5:31), indicates that only when the man is clear of iniquity does the water evaluate the fidelity of his wife, but if the man is not clear of iniquity does the water not evaluate the fidelity of his wife?

And if the mishna is rather referring to the alleged paramour, who is also evaluated by the water that the woman drinks, then let the mishna teach as is taught in its latter clause: Just as she is forbidden to her husband, so too is she forbidden to her paramour. Just as there the paramour is mentioned explicitly, so too here, the mishna should have stated: Just as the water evaluates whether she was unfaithful, so too, it evaluates whether the paramour committed this iniquity.

When the man is clear of iniquity, etc. — Bava Kamas 51a: The Rambam maintains that the water does not evaluate the wife of any man who has engaged in any illicit sexual intercourse during his adulthood. However, many of the early commentaries disagree; in their opinion, this fact applies only to one who engaged in sexual intercourse with his wife after she was rendered a sota by secluding herself with the alleged paramour after her husband’s warning (Rambam Sefer Nashim, Hilkhot Sota 2:8).

Rabbi Nebhemya says: The people sang the song together with Moses as is done when reciting Shema, which is recited in unison with Moses as leader begins, and not as is done when reciting halil.

HALAKHA

If he has committed a similar iniquity — Bava Kamas 51a: Rashi explains that this is referring to the husband having engaged in sexual intercourse with his wife after her seclusion with the other man. However, later commentators question the notion that this transgression should be punishable by death. One explanation is that the husband may have caused his wife to sin through his own sinful behavior, and is therefore liable to receive the same punishment (Eshel Avraham). Others explain that the Gemara does not entertain the possibility that the husband should die, but rather that if he is guilty of forbidden intercourse with his wife he is punished with suffering similar to hers, albeit on a smaller scale (Torat HaKenot; Devar Shaul).

If the man is not clear of iniquity— Bava Kamas 51a: The Rambam understands this principle in a very broad sense, stating that any man who has engaged in illicit sexual intercourse at any point in his adult lifetime cannot be considered clear of iniquity, and the water will not evaluate his wife. Others disagree, maintaining that this principle applies only to one who transgressed the prohibition against engaging in sexual intercourse with his wife after she was rendered a sota. The Ramban, in his Commentary on the Torah, rules based on the Gemara below (51b) that not only is the water ineffective in evaluating the wife when the husband is not clear of iniquity, but this is the case even if any members of their household are not clear of such a transgression. See Mohne LeMelakh, where there is a discussion as to why the Rambam does not cite that Gemara.

PERSONALITIES
Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hircanus — This Sage is mentioned only in this mishna, and it is unknown who he was. It would appear from the context that he was a disciple of Rabbi Akiva. Some scholars maintain that he was the younger brother of Rabbi Elezer ben Hircanus, but there is no evidence of this.

NOTES
And still the matter is even— The mishna states that the ambiguity is due to the fact that the verse states To him, the verse can be read either as a declarative sentence, ‘Though He will slay me, still I will trust in Him’; or it can be read as a rhetorical question, ‘Shall I still trust in Him even if He slays me?’ Therefore, further evidence is necessary to resolve the ambiguity, as the problem cannot be resolved through the verse itself.

The disciple of your disciple — Shemot Vayehi 6:12: Earlier in the mishna, Rabbi Yehoshua refers to Rabbi Akiva as the disciple of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakka, although Rabbi Akiva, like Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hircanus, was only a disciple of his disciples, as he studied under Rabbi Yohanan’s students Rabbi Elezer and Rabbi Yehoshua. The Rambam (Commentary on the Mishna) explains that Rabbi Yehoshua refers to Rabbi Akiva as Rabbi Yohanan’s disciple in order to emphasize that due to the spectacular degree of Rabbi Akiva’s scholarship, he could be considered worthy of being a disciple of Rabbi Yohanan himself, while Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hircanus, whose greatness was of a smaller magnitude, did not deserve as lofty a description. Alternatively, since Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hircanus was a student of Rabbi Akiva, he was therefore referred to as a disciple of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakka’s disciple (Torat Hiyyim).
The Gemara answers: The entire mishna actually does refer to the paramount, and the reason he is not mentioned explicitly in the first clause of the mishna is because since it teaches that the water evaluates whether the wife was unfaithful by using the direct object her, it also teaches that the water evaluates whether the paramount committed the act using the direct object him, without mentioning the paramount explicitly. In the latter clause of the mishna, on the other hand, since it teaches explicitly that the woman is forbidden to her husband, it also teaches explicitly that she is forbidden to her paramount.

In the mishna Rabbi Akiva proves that the water evaluates the paramount as well, as it is stated: “And the water that causes the curse shall enter into her” (Numbers 5:24), and: “And the water that causes the curse shall enter into her and become bitter” (Numbers 5:27). A dilemma was raised before the Sages concerning the precise wording of the mishna: Does the mishna state: “Shall enter [ba’u],” and shall enter [wau]? According to this version of the mishna, it is derived from the superfluous conjoining prefix vav that the paramount is also evaluated by the water. Or, alternatively, does the mishna state: “And shall enter,” and shall enter, indicating that this halakha is derived from the repetition of the phrase in two separate verses?

Come and hear a proof from Rabbi Akiva’s second statement in the mishna, where he says: Just as she is forbidden to her husband, so too is she forbidden to her paramount, as it is stated: “Is defiled [nitma’a],” “And is defiled [venitma’a]” (Numbers 5:29). Here it seems that Rabbi Akiva derives his interpretation from the superfluous prefix vav rather than from the repetition of the phrase. Therefore, the first derivation should be understood in the same manner.

The Gemara asks: But still, let the dilemma be raised with regard to this halakha too: Does Rabbi Akiva state that the source for the halakha is the mention of the phrase “is defiled,” “is defiled,” in two different verses (Numbers 5:14, 29), or does he state that the halakha is derived from the superfluous vav in the phrase “is defiled,” rendering it “and is defiled” (Numbers 5:29)?

Come and hear a proof from the fact that the mishna teaches in the latter clause that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi says: The two times that the wife’s defilement is stated in the passage, namely: “And he warns his wife, and she is defiled” (Numbers 5:14), and the later verse: “When a wife, being under her husband, goes astray and is defiled” (Numbers 5:29), indicate that there are two prohibitions due to her defilement. One is to forbid her to her husband and one is to forbid her to her paramount. By inference from the fact that the dissenting derivation of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi is from the repetition of the entire phrase, evidently Rabbi Akiva derives this halakha from the superfluous vav.

Therefore, according to the opinion of Rabbi Akiva, since the phrase “and the water...shall enter” is mentioned three times in the passage, and the prefix vav, written each time, is expounded as though the phrase were mentioned twice, the phrase is treated as though it were written in six verses, as follows.

One of the mentions (Numbers 5:27) is interpreted for the command concerning her, the woman, meaning that God empowered the waters to punish the woman; and one, the prefix vav in that same verse, is expounded for the command concerning him, the paramount, i.e., that he too shall be punished by the water if he is guilty.

One mention of the phrase, in the description of the drinking of the bitter water of a sota (Numbers 5:24), is interpreted for the execution of her punishment, as the punishment will go into effect so long as the process was performed properly; and one, the prefix vav in that verse, is expounded for the execution of his punishment.
One mention (Numbers 5:22) is for her knowledge, i.e., the priest informs her that this punishment will be the result; and one, the prefix saiv that introduces the various mentions of this matter. He therefore interprets one for the command, and one for the execution, and one for the knowledge, all with regard to the woman herself.

The Gemara asks: And from where does Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi derive the principle in the mishna that just as the water evaluates whether she was unfaithful, so too, it evaluates whether he committed the sin?

The Gemara answers: He derives it from that which is taught in a baraita, that the verse: “And cause the belly to swell and the thigh to fall away” (Numbers 5:22), is referring to the belly and thigh of the paramour. Do you say that the intention is the belly and the thigh of the paramour, or is it only the belly and the thigh of the adulteress? When it says later: “And her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall fall away” (Numbers 5:27), the belly and thigh of the adulteress are explicitly stated. And therefore, how do I realize the meaning of the former verse: “And cause the belly to swell, and the thigh to fall away”? Clearly, it is referring to the belly and thigh of the paramour.

And how does the other tanna, Rabbi Akiva, interpret the repetition of verses? The former verse indicates that the priest informs her that her belly will be afflicted first and then her thigh, so as not to cast aspersions on the bitter water of a sota, i.e., to prevent people from claiming that the guilty woman’s death was not due to the bitter water but rather to some other cause. The reason people might claim this is that the priest says to the woman: “The Lord will make you a curse and an oath among your people, when the Lord makes your thigh fall away, and your belly swell” (Numbers 5:21). This seems to imply that her thigh is supposed to be afflicted before her belly. Therefore, when her belly swells first, people might conclude that it is not due to the water. It is for this reason that the priest needs to inform her that her belly will swell first.

And why does the other tanna, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, disagree with Rabbi Akiva? The Gemara answers: If it is so that the verse: “And cause the belly to swell, and the thigh to fall away” (Numbers 5:22), is referring to the woman, the verse should have written: Her belly... and her thigh. What is meant by the phraseology of “the belly... and the thigh”? Conclude from it that it is referring to the belly and thigh of the paramour.

The Gemara asks: And say that the entire verse comes for this, to indicate that the water evaluates the paramour as well, and does not teach the order of the punishment? The Gemara answers: If so, the Torah should have written: His belly... and his thigh. What is the meaning of the general wording: “The belly... and the thigh”? Conclude from it two conclusions: That the paramour is punished and that the priest informs the woman with regard to the order of the punishment.

It is stated in the mishna that Rabbi Yehoshua said: That was how Zekharya ben HaKatza would interpret it. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi says: The two times that the defilement of the wife is stated in the passage indicate that there are two prohibitions due to her defilement; one is to forbid her to her husband and one is to forbid her to her paramour.
The Sages taught in a baraita: With regard to the three times that the defilement of the wife is stated in the passage, namely: “If she is defiled” (Numbers 5:27), “and he warns his wife, and she is defiled” (Numbers 5:14), and “when a wife being under her husband goes astray and is defiled” (Numbers 5:29), why are all three necessary? One is to prohibit her to her husband, and one is to prohibit her to her paramour, and one is to prohibit her from partaking of teruma, even if she is the wife or daughter of a priest. This is the statement of Rabbi Akiva.

Rabbi Yishmael said: It is unnecessary to derive from a verse that it would also be prohibited for this woman to marry a priest, as it can be derived a fortiori: If a divorced daughter of a priest, who is permitted to partake of teruma, is nevertheless forbidden to marry into the priesthood, then with regard to this sota, who is forbidden to partake of teruma, is it not logical that it is also prohibited for her to marry into the priesthood?

From here you can derive the halakha in a case of uncertainty with regard to whether the carcass of a creeping animal has imparted ritual impurity. Just as in the case of a sota, where the Torah does not consider unwitting adultery like intentional adultery, and rape is not treated like a willing transgression, because if a married woman committed adultery unwittingly or was raped she is not punished, yet still the Torah considers an uncertain case of adultery like a certain violation inasmuch as the woman is forbidden to her husband until the truth is clarified; so too, with regard to a creeping animal or other agents of ritual impurity, where the Torah does consider unwitting contact with impure items like intentional contact, as one contracts impurity whether or not his contact was intentional and an accident is treated like willing contact; is it not logical that the Torah must also consider an uncertain case of transmission of ritual impurity?

Other early commentators point out additional refutations for this a fortiori argument. Consequently, several of them concur with the understanding of Rabbeinu Tam (Sefer HaYashar), who states based on the Gemara in tractate Hullin (6b) that the real source for this halakha is an oral tradition from Shmuel, and the a fortiori inference is cited only as an additional corroboration for the halakha. Therefore, the Gemara does not deal with the numerous possible ways of refuting the argument.

From here you can derive the halakha with regard to a creeping animal — Tosafot note that logically one might refute this a fortiori argument. With regard to a sota there is circumstantial evidence that she is guilty, as her husband had warned her to stay away from a specific man and she subsequently secluded herself with him, and one witness testified that they engaged in sexual intercourse. With regard to uncertain ritual impurity, however, that is not the case.

In the case of a sota where the Torah does not consider unwitting adultery like intentional adultery, etc. — see Shas Shachot: if a woman committed adultery unwittingly, or if she was raped, the water does not evaluate her (Rambam Sefer Tahara, Hilkhot She'ar Avot HaTumot 16:1–2).

HALAKHA

From here you can derive the halakha with regard to a creeping animal — The Sages derive various halakhot with regard to ritual impurity from the halakhot of a sota, e.g., cases of uncertain impurity that arise in the private domain are to be treated as impure, just as a sota is treated stringently and is forbidden to her husband in a case where she secluded herself with another man in the private domain (Rambam Sefer Tahara, Hilkhot She'ar Avot HaTumot 16:1–2).
like a case of certain contact with an impure item? Accordingly, any cases of uncertain ritual impurity should be treated like certain impurity.

The baraita concludes: And from here the Sages stated that if an entity that has awareness in order for it to be asked may have contracted impurity in the private domain, its uncertain impurity renders it impure; but if it may have contracted impurity in the public domain, its uncertain impurity leaves it pure. And with regard to an entity that lacks awareness in order for it to be asked, whether the uncertainty arose in the private domain or in the public domain, its uncertain impurity is deemed pure, as it is not similar to a sota.

The Gemara begins its discussion of the baraita by inquiring about the exchange between Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva: And what was the intention of Rabbi Yishmael? Apparently, he commented on a statement of Rabbi Akiva, who said that it is prohibited for a sota to partake of teruma, and he answered him concerning the matter of the woman’s being prohibited to marry into the priesthood, which was not mentioned by Rabbi Akiva at all.

And furthermore, from where does Rabbi Akiva derive that it is prohibited for a sota to marry into the priesthood? And if you would say that with regard to her prohibition against marrying into the priesthood a verse is not necessary,