

Numbers Chapter 5

Verses 1-31

Chapters 5 and 6 describe the setting-apart of the people of God in certain areas:

- (1) By separation from defiling things (chapter 5);
- (2) In the taking of a Nazarite vow (chapter 6);
- (3) By the offerings of the princes (chapter 7);
- (4) By the setting apart of the Levites (chapter 8);
- (5) By observing the first annual Passover (9:1-14); and
- (6) By being led by God Himself (9:15 – 10:10).

Verses 1-4

Lepers, those with discharges, and those who had come in contact with the dead were to be “put out of the camp”.

These items were addressed (in Leviticus chapters 13, 15, and 21:2-3).

The reason was that God dwelt there, in the midst of the camp (see 1 Cor. chapter 5; 2 Cor. 6:14 – 7:13; 2 Thess. 3:14; Titus 3:10-11; 2 John chapters 10 and 11; and Rev. 21:3-4, 27).

These verses deal with outward, visible defects.

Numbers 5:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

"Saying":

As follows.

This is the beginning of another section.

Numbers 5:2 "Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead:"

“Leper”:

One having an infectious skin disease (compare Lev. 13:1 – 14:57).

“An issue”:

A bodily emission indicative of disease, primarily from the sex organs (compare Lev. 15:1-33).

“The dead”:

Physical contact with a dead body (compare Lev. 21:11).

All of these prohibitions had sensible health benefits as well as serving to illustrate the need for moral cleanliness when approaching God.

In our book on Leviticus, we dealt with this fully.

Chapter 13 and 14 of Leviticus gives the law of the leper.

Chapter 15 deals with those who have an issue.

Being defiled by the dead is spoken of (in Leviticus chapter 11 verse 24 and chapter 21 verse 1).

We should realize from the start, that this policy was carried out to keep down the spread of disease.

Leviticus 13:46 "All the days wherein the plague [shall be] in him he shall be defiled; he [is] unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp [shall] his habitation [be]."

In our land, today, there is a plague called A.I.D.S.

If we do not somehow isolate this disease, it could wipe out our population.

We noticed in those lessons in Leviticus, that "leprosy's" symbolic meaning was sin.

We must consider A.I.D.S. in this spiritual sense as well, and repent of the sins associated with it.

Then perhaps, God will stay this plague.

Numbers 5:3 "Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell."

“Without the camp ... in the midst whereof I dwell”:

God’s holy presence in the cloud in the tabernacle demanded cleanness.

Therefore, all the unclean were barred from the encampment of Israel.

There is no difference here, because a female can be just as contagious as a male.

The removal of anything that might pollute their camp had to be because, in those days, they did not have disinfectants as we do today.

The main reason they were to be physically and spiritually clean in every way, was because the presence of God was in the camp with them.

You must study the book on Leviticus to realize the wholesomeness that God requires of each of us.

Numbers 5:4 "And the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp: as the LORD spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel."

Aben Ezra observes, that this was done immediately before they journeyed.

And that those that were defiled journeyed between the standard of Ephraim and the standard of Dan.

But this, he says, was by way of conjecture, since it is not expressed.

"As the LORD spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel":

They were obedient in this particular.

This shows their obedience to the will of God.

We do know that their condition must be examined by the priest, before they could re-enter the camp.

This then, had a spiritual significance, as well as a physical.

Verses 5-10

There are three matters Israel must make right before they enter the Promised Land, so as not to squabble among themselves and neglect God's plan for them as a nation.

The first two items are an invitation to all who had stolen things or otherwise defrauded their neighbors.

These things must be made right (Lev. 6:1-5).

Then, details are given in the event of that person's death.

If he has died, restitution must be made to his near relatives; if they are all dead, restitution must be made to the priest.

Sin must be paid for.

These verses deal with personal sins, which are not as outwardly visible as the uncleanness of verses 5:1-4.

Numbers 5:5 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

Or continued to speak to him at the same time.

Now we see a sudden break in the message from the LORD to Moses.

Numbers 5:6 "Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty;"

“Against the LORD”:

A sin committed against God’s people was considered a sin committed against God Himself.

There was a need for confession and restitution in addition to the trespass offering (compare Lev. 5:14 – 6:7).

In the 5th and 6th chapter of Leviticus, we see this very thing talked about.

Jesus said it so well, when He spoke of putting God first and neighbor second, even before self.

If we love God, we will keep His commandments.

If we love our neighbor, we will not commit sin against him either.

Actually, when we sin against our neighbor, we are sinning against God's law.

Someone may accuse us of sin, but the sin is when we are not just accused, but guilty.

Numbers 5:7 "Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth [part] thereof, and give [it] unto [him] against whom he hath trespassed."

The form of which confession, according to Fagius, was: O LORD, I am guilty of death, I have deserved to be stoned for this sin.

Or to be strangled for this trespass, or to be burnt for this crime, etc.

"And he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof”:

Paying the whole of whatsoever he had in any manner defrauded his neighbor of.

To which he was to add a fifth part of that.

That is, as Aben Ezra interprets it, it he confesses of himself.

But if there are witnesses of it he must add two fifths, and some say a fifth of a fifth.

"And give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed":

As a satisfaction for the injury done him.

This principal is paying the last cent you owe them from trespassing against them, and giving them 20% interest for the trouble you caused.

Being truly sorry for the sin you have committed is more believable, when you compensate the person you sinned against.

True repentance is a turn away from sin.

Numbers 5:8 "But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the LORD, [even] to the priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him."

"No kinsman":

A supplement to (Lev. 6:1-7).

If the injured party had died and there was no family member to receive the restitution called for (in verse 7), it was to go to the priest as the LORD's representative.

This is speaking of a time when the person has died that you sinned against, and you have no one left to pay.

True repentance is shown when you take the same value you took, and add 20% to it, and take it to the church.

You have removed the worth of the sin from yourself, and cleared your conscience.

In this Scripture, we see a man who wants to do God's will at all cost to himself.

Luke 19:8 "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore [him] fourfold."

We see in the Scripture above, that the man who repents and restores what he has taken, will have an atonement provided for him.

The ram was the sacrifice of atonement.

Jesus is our atonement.

Numbers 5:9 "And every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring unto the priest, shall be his."

Of the holy sacrifices brought by them to be offered up.

That part of them which is elevated, heaved, or waved, as the heave shoulder and wave breast.

"Which they bring unto the priest, shall be his":

What they bring to him to offer for them shall be his who performs the service.

Even that part of them which is his due.

The High Priest was to live off the gifts brought to the tabernacle.

This shows that these payments belong to the priest.

Exodus 29:28 "And it shall be Aaron's and his sons' by a statute for ever from the children of Israel: for it [is] a heave offering: and it shall be a heave offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifice of their peace offerings, [even] their heave offering unto the LORD."

Numbers 5:10 "And every man's hallowed things shall be his: whatsoever any man giveth the priest, it shall be his."

Which he, by a vow or freewill offering, separates to holy uses.

These are at his own dispose, to give to what priest he will, or they are the priest's.

For what a man devotes to the LORD is to be given to them, or such things as God has hallowed, sanctified, and set apart for sacred uses.

As the firstfruits and tithes, they were the priests'.

The Jewish writers restrain it to tithes.

"Whatsoever any man giveth the priest, it shall be his":

His personally, who officiates.

Or to whom the gift is given, and is not to be divided among the other priests in the course.

This is pretty much a statement like unto the earlier statement.

1 Corinthians 9:13 "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live [of the things] of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?"

Verses 11-31

These verses deal with the most intimate of human relationships and the most secret of sins.

Adultery was to be determined and dealt with to maintain the purity of the camp.

To accomplish that purity, God called for a very elaborate and public trial.

If adultery was proven, it was punished with death, and this ceremony made guilt or innocence very apparent.

It was not a trial with normal judicial process, since such sins are secret and lack witnesses, but it was effective.

The ceremony was designed to be so terrifying and convicting that the very tendencies of human nature would make it clear if the person was guilty.

Verses 11-14

Adulterous wives are picked out for special attention because this act pollutes those involved, making them unclean (verses 13, 19, 28; Lev. 18:20, 25, 27).

Numbers 5:11 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

This is a break in the last message and is going to a new subject.

We are reminded that these are not Moses' thoughts.

They are the LORD's instruction.

At the same time and delivered to him a new law.

Numbers 5:12 "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him,"

It being an affair which concerned them.

"If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him":

The sin of adultery, which is a going aside out of the way of virtue and chastity, and a trespass against a husband.

A breach of the marriage covenant with him, a defiling of his bed, or doing an injury and dishonor to him.

Bringing confusion into his family, and a spurious offspring to possess his substance.

Though this is to be understood, not of certain adultery, of which there is plain and full proof.

For then there would be no occasion of such a trial, as is afterwards directed to.

Besides, her husband, in such a case, might put her away.

And even, according to the law, she was to be put to death (Lev. 20:10).

But of her having committed it in the opinion of her husband, he having some ground of suspicion, though he could not be certain of it.

And therefore, by this law, was allowed to make trial, that he might find it out.

It at present only a suspected case, and a doubtful one.

And the Jews say, "they never gave the waters drink but in a doubtful case."

And so this may interpreted of her declining and departing from her husband's house.

Not keeping at home to mind the affairs of her family, but gadding abroad, and keeping company with another man, or other men.

And that after she had been warned and charged by her husband to the contrary, and so had disobeyed him, and acted contrary to his will.

And in that sense, had committed a trespass, and so had given him suspicion of her chastity, for which he might have some reason.

If, as it is said in the Misnah, he gave her an admonition before two witnesses, saying, have no talk with such a man, and yet she talks with him.

Or, as the commentators add, be not secretly or in private with such a one, and yet goes into a private place with him.

And stays so long with him that she may be defiled.

This with them rendered her suspected.

This "trespass" is speaking of her ruining the good name of her husband.

The key word in this is "if".

It would be embarrassing to the man for his wife to be thought of as a woman of sin.

Numbers 5:13 "And a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and [there be] no witness against her, neither she be taken [with the manner];"

That is, is suspected that he has so done.

Not that it is a clear case, for it follows:

"And it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close":

So that it is not known by her husband, nor by any other.

"She hath hid herself", so Ainsworth.

Being in a private place with another man, though warned to the contrary by her husband.

"And she be defiled, and there be no witness against her.

Of her being defiled, though there may be of her being in private with such a man.

"Neither she be taken with the manner":

Or in the act of uncleanness.

"To lie carnally with her" is speaking of adultery.

In this particular verse, they were not caught in the act, nor was there a witness to the sin.

Numbers 5:14 "And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled:"

"The spirit of jealousy":

A mood of suspicion came over the husband that his wife had defiled herself with another man.

The accuracy of the suspicion was determined to be right or wrong.

This jealousy is caused, because the husband is suspicious that she has lain with another man.

It is not proven, but he has become jealous, because he believes she has committed adultery.

Verses 15-18

She is to be brought “unto the priest”, who in turn will “set her before the LORD”.

God will be the judge in this case, as the man has only suspicions, a “spirit of jealousy”, by no witnesses (that is, earthly witnesses), are available.

But an omniscient God saw it all.

The last part of verse 15 could be rendered “a reminder offering to draw attention to guilt”, indicating this offering will draw the LORD’s attention (1 Kings 17:18; Ezek. 21:23-24; 29:16).

“Holy Water” appears only here in the Old Testament.

Water symbolizes life and fertility (Psalm 1:3; Jer. 17:13), and occasionally is a figure of speech for male semen (Prov. 5:16; compare 9:17).

“Dust” refers to Abraham’s seed, the food the serpent ate, and what man was created from.

“Bitter water” likely refers to the effect rather than the taste.

Numbers 5:15 "Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth [part] of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it [is] an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance."

“Bringing iniquity to remembrance”:

The purpose of the husband’s offering was to bring the secret iniquity (if it was present), to light.

How this was done is explained in 5:18, 25-26.

The man should not work on suspicion.

He should not take it upon himself to decide whether she is guilty or not.

They bring her to the priest, and he determines whether she is guilty or not.

The priest is compensated for the time he spends on this, by the tenth part of an ephah of barley he brings to the priest.

This offering is not accompanied with frankincense.

This is a jealousy offering.

God had given them this formula of determining whether she had sinned or not.

Numbers 5:16 "And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD:"

Or "offer it", as the Vulgate Latin version.

That is, the offering of jealousy.

"And set her before the LORD":

Or "it", the offering.

For the setting of the woman before the LORD is spoken of in (Num. 5:18).

This is probably speaking of her being at the brazen altar.

It certainly does not mean that she was in the very presence of God in the most Holy Place.

This just means that the LORD will judge her.

Numbers 5:17 "And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put [it] into the water:"

Which also is called the water of purification of sprinkling (read Num. 19:9).

Out of the laver, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, and so Jarchi and Aben Ezra.

"In an earthen vessel":

Which held half a log, and that was but a quarter of a pint, or three egg shells.

For no more was assigned, to a suspected woman, according to the Misnah.

Some say only a fourth part: an earthen vessel was made use of, as everything vile and mean was in this affair.

"And of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water":

First the water was put in, and then the dust, as Ben Gersom observes.

There was a place a cubit square, where was a marble table, and a ring fixed in it.

And when he lifted it up he took dust from under it, and put it so as it might be upon the top of the water; which was used.

Either, as the Targum of Jonathan suggests, because the end of all flesh is to come to dust, and so to put her in mind of her original and her end.

And in like manner the earthen vessel might signify, that she would be broke to pieces as that vessel.

As also it might direct her thoughts to the tempter, by the influence of whose temptation she had been drawn into this sin.

Dust being the serpent's food.

And this being taken off the floor of the tabernacle, might add to the veneration of it.

And make it more solemn and awful to drink of it.

Holy water is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.

I assume this is speaking of water that had been dedicated for use in the tabernacle.

It could be water that was in the laver nearby.

The fact that it was in an earthen vessel shows the association of the possible sin with worldliness.

Again, the floor of the tabernacle is not mentioned elsewhere.

This is not like any other offering in the tabernacle.

This is to determine innocence or guilt.

Numbers 5:18 "And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which [is] the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse:"

“Before the LORD”:

The woman was brought to a priest at the tabernacle.

There she was in the presence of the LORD, who knew her guilt or innocence.

“Uncover the woman’s head”:

Literally “unbind the head”.

(In Lev. 10:6; 13:45; 21:10), this phrase signifies mourning.

This seems to signify the expectation of judgment and consequent mourning if the woman was proven to be guilty.

“Bitter water that causeth the curse”:

This water included dust from the tabernacle floor (5:17), and the ink used to write the curses (5:23).

The woman was to drink the water (5:26).

If the woman was guilty, the water would make her life bitter by carrying out the curse of making her thigh rot and her belly swell (5:21, 27).

The public, frightening nature of this test could not fail to make guilt or innocence appear when the conscience was so assaulted.

Other Scriptures speak of the woman's hair as being her covering.

This I do not believe means shaving of her head as an adulteress, but possibly means removing a veil, or hair covering.

This shows, she has embarrassed her husband.

She holds the water and dust in her hands in the earthen vessel.

This bitter water is bitter in judgement.

Verses 19-28

This relates the decision.

“Thy thigh to rot and thy belly to swell”:

In adultery, the woman sinned with her thigh and conceived in her belly.

What it means medically is uncertain.

But the contrast with the innocent wife indicates that she would be childless, and be “a curse among her people”.

Genesis 20:17, mentions that Abimelech's wives became sterile as a result of his intention to commit adultery with Sarah, and (Lev. 20:20-21), predict the same will befall couples guilty of incestuous relationships.

God would thus come to the aid of a "jealous" husband if he had no other proof.

The importance of purity in marriage is also underscored, for marriage was a picture of the relationship between God and His people (compare Jer. 2:1 – 3:5).

Numbers 5:19 "And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness [with another] instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse:"

Or give her by an oath.

"And say unto the woman, if no man hath lain with thee":

Besides her husband.

"And if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband":

Which is but another phrase expressive of the same thing, the sin of adultery.

"Be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse":

If this is the case, it shall produce no bitter effects, or bring any curse upon thee.

This oath speaks of her innocence, until proven guilty.

Again "if" is the key word.

Numbers 5:20 "But if thou hast gone aside [to another] instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband:"

Gone aside from the paths of modesty and chastity, and betook herself to another man's bed instead of her husband's.

"And if thou be defiled":

By committing adultery.

"And some man hath lain with thee beside thy husband":

These phrases are all synonymous, and a heap of words are made use of to express the sin.

And that there might be no evasion of it, and that it might be clear what was intended, this being said on oath.

This is a terrible sin in God's sight.

This involves the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, if you are a Christian.

This would be doubly sinful for someone proclaiming Christianity, because you would be trying to include the Holy Spirit in your sin.

Numbers 5:21 "Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The LORD make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the LORD doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell;"

An oath which has a curse annexed to it, if taken falsely.

Which was to be pronounced upon the woman if guilty.

"And the priest shall say unto the woman":

Pronouncing the imprecation or curse upon her.

She having taken the oath, should she be guilty of the crime suspected of, and she had sworn concerning:

"The LORD make thee a curse, and an oath among thy people":

Accursed according to the oath taken.

Or let this be the form of an oath and imprecation used by the people, saying, if I have done so and so, let me be accursed as such a woman.

Or let not that happen to me, as did to such a woman, so Jarchi.

"When the LORD doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell":

Upon drinking the bitter waters.

But though these things followed upon that, yet not as the natural cause of them.

For they are ascribed to the LORD, and to a supernatural and miraculous power of his, which went along with the drinking of them.

The curse that comes with this type of, sin, is a curse upon her body.

This seems as though the curse is just on the woman who committed adultery, but it is not.

The priest is dealing with the jealous husband in this.

The man involved in the adultery is not even present here.

In God's sight, adultery is a terrible sin for the man and woman involved in the sin.

Numbers 5:22 "And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make [thy] belly to swell, and [thy] thigh to rot: And the woman shall say, Amen, amen."

Upon the drinking of which the curse follows, if guilty.

"Shall go into thy bowels":

And there operate and produce the above effects, which are repeated again to inject terror.

"To make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot":

Here ends the form of the oath, which begins (Num. 5:19).

"And the woman shall say":

May it be as you wished (as in Psalm 41:13; Deut. 27:15).

"Amen, amen":

So be it.

Let it be as pronounced, if I am guilty.

Which, as Aben Ezra observes, is repeated for the sake of confirmation.

Though the Jewish writers commonly understand it as respecting various things.

The oath and the curse, the thing charged with, and the persons suspected of.

The woman has agreed when she said amen.

"Amen" means so be it.

The priest speaks the curse on the woman, if she has sinned.

The woman has not been proven guilty, so the curse is not in effect, until she is proven guilty.

Numbers 5:23 "And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot [them] out with the bitter water:"

The above curses imprecated on herself by an oath.

The words and the letters of them were written at length, in a scroll of parchment.

And, as some say, also her name, but not her double amen to them.

"And he shall blot them out with the bitter water":

Wash them out with it, and into it, or scrape them off of the parchment into it.

The washing shows that this curse for this sin goes off into the water.

The writing of the sin being washed into the water, along with the curses, would frighten a person who was guilty.

The ink is now in the water, with the dirt and water.

This water is getting more bitter all the time.

Numbers 5:24 "And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, [and become] bitter."

Having the curse imprecated upon herself, if guilty, scraped into it.

And this she was obliged to drink, whether she would or not.

So it is said, if the roll is blotted out, and she says I am defiled, the water is poured out, and her offering is scattered in the place of ashes.

If the roll is blotted out, and she says I will not drink, then force her.

And make her drink whether she will or not.

"And the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter":

Produce the sad and bitter effects mentioned.

This is speaking of the curse going down into her innermost being.

Numbers 5:25 "Then the priest shall take the jealousy offering out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the offering before the LORD, and offer it upon the altar:"

Which she was obliged to hold in her hand while the above rites and ceremonies were performed.

Which was very heavy, being an omer of barley flour.

A measure about three quarts, which was put into an Egyptian basket made of small palm tree twigs.

And this was put into her hands to weary her, as before observed.

That, having her mind distressed, she might the sooner confess her crime.

"And shall wave the offering before the LORD":

Backwards and forwards, upwards and downwards, as Jarchi.

Who also observes, that the woman waved with him, for her hand was above the hand of the priest.

So the tradition is, "he (her husband) took her offering out of the Egyptian basket, and put it into a ministering vessel.

And gave it into her hand, and the priest put his hand under hers, and waved it".

"And offer it upon the altar":

This was the bringing of it to the southwest corner of the altar, as Jarchi says, before he took a handful out of it, as in other meat offerings.

This just means that a very small portion was offered on the altar to burn.

The rest of it, in the earthen vessel, is beside the altar.

Numbers 5:26 "And the priest shall take a handful of the offering, [even] the memorial thereof, and burn [it] upon the altar, and afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water."

For good or evil, according as her works were, as Aben Ezra observes.

A memorial for good, if innocent, and a memorial for evil, if guilty.

"And burn it upon the altar":

As the handful of other meat offerings used to be (Lev. 1:2).

"And afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water":

Oblige her to it.

Having proceeded thus far, and no confession made, namely, an oath taken.

The curses of it written in a scroll and scraped into the waters, and the jealousy offering waved and offered.

The water the woman drinks will not hurt her, unless she is guilty of the sin she has been charged with.

Numbers 5:27 "And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, [that], if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, [and become] bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people."

For, as before observed, and here by Jarchi again.

If she says I will not drink it, after the roll is blotted out, they oblige her, and make her drink it whether she will or not.

Unless she says I am defiled.

"Then it shall come to pass, that if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband":

Or has committed adultery.

"That the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter":

The water drank by her, and having the curses scraped into it, shall enter into her, and operate and produce bitter and dreadful effects.

"And her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot":

Not through any natural virtue in the water, or what is put into it.

Either the dust of the floor of the tabernacle, or the scrapings of the parchment roll, these could have no physical influence to produce such effects.

But they must be ascribed to a supernatural cause, the power and curse of God attending this draught.

"And the woman shall be a curse among her people":

The time she lives.

But then all this while she was looked upon as an accursed person, and despised and shunned by all.

The curse has no effect on her at all, if she is not guilty of this sin.

If she has sinned, she is cursed and terrible punishment comes upon her body.

This is a sin of the flesh, and it is the flesh that pays the penalty for this sin.

It is interesting, to me, that many diseases that harm the body greatly are sexually transmitted diseases.

Sin then, is sin now.

Adultery and sodomy are sin.

Numbers 5:28 "And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed."

“Shall conceive seed”:

The penalty for the guilty wife was obvious, since the death penalty was called for.

In contrast, the innocent wife was assured she would live to bring forth children.

This is a terrible thing to go through, if you are innocent.

God blesses her with a child, if she has not committed this sin.

This shows the world her innocence.

Numbers 5:29 "This [is] the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside [to another] instead of her husband, and is defiled;"

Which was appointed by God to deter wives from adultery, and preserve the people of Israel.

The worshippers of Him, from having a spurious brood among them.

And to keep husbands from being cruel to their wives they might be jealous of.

And to protect virtue and innocence, and to detect lewdness committed in the most secret manner.

Whereby God gave proof of His omniscience, that He had knowledge of the most private acts of uncleanness, and was the avenger of all such.

The reasons why such a law was not made equally in favor of women, as of men, are supposed to be these.

Because of the greater authority of the man over the woman.

Which would seem to be lessened, if such a power was granted her.

Because marriage was not so much hurt, or so much damage came to families by the adultery of men, as of women.

Because women are more apt to be suspicious than men.

And in those times more prone to adultery.

Through their eager desire of children, that they might not lie under reproach.

"When a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled":

Is suspected of going aside to another man, and is supposed to be defiled by him.

The guilt or innocence, is verified by God in this ceremony.

Women must set a high standard of conduct.

The husband and wife are symbols of God and His church.

2 Corinthians 11:2 "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present [you as] a chaste virgin to Christ."

Jesus is the Bridegroom, and all believers in Christ are His bride.

The one thing He will not allow from us, is unfaithfulness.

This practice ceased during the time of Jesus.

Numbers 5:30 "Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law."

See notes on (Num. 5:14).

"And shall set the woman before the LORD":

Has carried the matter so far as to bring his wife to the priest or civil magistrate, and declare his suspicion, and the ground of it.

"And the priest shall execute upon her all this law":

He shall proceed according to the law, and perform every rite and ceremony required.

Nor could any stop be put to it, unless the woman owned she was defiled.

This is just stating that jealousy should not go on by the husband, but should be settled in the tabernacle before the priest.

The LORD determines innocence or guilt.

Numbers 5:31 "Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity."

Which otherwise he would not, by conniving at her loose way of living.

The man might accuse his wife on suspicion and not be reproved.

And not reproving her for it, and bringing her either to repentance or punishment.

And retaining and encouraging jealousy in his mind, without declaring it, and his reasons for it.

The sense of the passage seems to be, that when a man had any ground for his suspicion and jealousy, and he proceeded according as this law directs.

Whether his wife was guilty or not guilty, no sin was chargeable on him, or blame to be laid to him, or punishment inflicted on him.

"And this woman shall bear her iniquity":

The punishment of it, through the effects of the bitter waters upon her, if guilty.

Nor was her husband chargeable with her death, she justly brought it on herself.

Or if not guilty, yet as she had by some unbecoming behavior raised such a suspicion in him, nor would she be reclaimed.

Though warned to the contrary, she for it justly bore the infamy of such a process.

Which was such, as Maimonides says, that innocent women would give all that they had to escape it.

And reckoned death itself more agreeable than that, as to be served as such a woman was (see note on Num. 5:18).

Jealousy without a cause, is sin.

The jealousy must be done away with.

The best thing to do is let God settle it.

The woman should be willing to pay for her own indiscretion.

One way or the other, the matter is settled.

Numbers Chapter 5 Questions

1. Who were to be put out of the camp?
2. Where, in the Bible, do we find the law of the leper?
3. What is the plague in our land today?
4. "Leprosy" symbolically means _____.
5. Is there any difference in the law between male and female?
6. What was their main reason for being physically and spiritually clean in the camp?
7. What does verse 4 show?
8. What sin is verse 6 speaking of?
9. How did Jesus explain this very thing?
10. If we love our neighbor, we will not do what?
11. If we truly love God, we will keep His _____.
12. What was required above the repaying of the amount you took?
13. When is it more believable, that you are truly sorry for sinning against someone?
14. What do you do with the money, if the people you owe are dead?
15. Who will the money belong to that you bring to the temple?
16. What is the "trespass" in verse 12?
17. "To lie with her carnally" is speaking of _____.
18. What spirit came on the husband?
19. Who shall judge whether she is guilty, or not?
20. Where did they bring the woman?
21. What is the holy water, probably?
22. What is meant by putting it in an earthen vessel?

23. What does the uncovering of her head show?
24. What is the temple of the Holy Spirit?
25. What curse is spoken upon the woman, if she is guilty of adultery?
26. What happens, if she is not guilty?
27. Why is the guilty man not punished here?
28. "Amen" means what?
29. The washing of the book that was written on with the water shows what?
30. What does the priest burn in offering?
31. This is sin of the _____.
32. The author finds it very interesting, that many diseases that harm the body greatly are _____ transmitted.