

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

**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.**

**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.**

This chapter opens with a directive from the LORD to maintain a “clean” camp; both physically and spiritually. Moses is told to instruct the people to put outside the camp anyone that had leprosy or any kind of issue with leaking bodily fluid or running sores. Anyone who was unclean from contact with the dead was also to be put outside the camp.

Point is made that these directives applied to both male and female.

It is obvious to me that association with a dead body is in no way comparable with leprosy or disease. I think the point is that it is the LORD who determines what is unclean. He is making the point that uncleanness of any kind is not acceptable in His presence—and He had graced the sanctuary with the cloud of His presence.

I liked Guzik’s comment on this section: “Might this also be an analogy of our sin nature inherited from Adam? Even as a leper does not choose leprosy, but inherits it, so our sin nature is not chosen - but inherited from Adam. Of course, we choose individual acts of sin, but our sin nature was inherited.”

Important to note: The people did as the LORD had commanded; they were obedient.

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

**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;**

**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.**

**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.**

In this section the LORD addresses the issue of one person doing wrong to another. The first thing I noted was that the LORD considered it a sin against Him first and foremost. The next thing I noticed is that it is expected that men and women will sin—“commit any sin that men commit.” Once a person is found guilty of such a sin, he/she is to be made to confess their sin and make restitution plus 20% to the victim. If, for some reason, the victim is dead, restitution is to be made to their closest kin. If that is not possible, the restitution

is to be made to the LORD through the priest. He/she is also to bring a ram to be sacrificed in atonement for his sin.

It stands out to me that God intends that the sinner be held accountable for his sin before the LORD. In making restitution, he is to add 20% to the restitution—in effect, suffering a penalty or consequence for his sin. The ram that is sacrificed to atone for his sin before the LORD is a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus for all sinners; innocent blood was shed to atone for the sin.

Sin must be confessed for sin to be forgiven. I am reminded of the following verse:

*1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

**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.**

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

Any gift brought by someone to consecrate to the LORD was given to the priest. The first part of verse 10 was confusing, but Guzik provided some insight: "This command reminds of the absolute right the offerer had to share in such offerings; it is essentially a way to preserve an open door for fellowship with the LORD - the priest couldn't take the offerer's portion away, a king couldn't tax it away."

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

**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,**

**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*;**

**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:**

**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.**

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

**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:**

**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:**

**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:

**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:

**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;

**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.

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

**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*.

This section is far beyond our abilities to understand considering the great difference in cultures. It connects with the context of the chapter in the matter of maintaining purity before the LORD. It's basically providing a way for a husband that suspects his wife of infidelity to either confirm or dispel his suspicion in light of no incriminating evidence.

If the husband experiences a "spirit of jealousy," he is to bring his wife to the priest with an offering of a tenth of an ephah (two quarts) of barley meal with no oil or frankincense. The priest then brought the woman near him to stand before the LORD. He was to take a clay jar of holy water and mix it with some dust from the floor of the tabernacle. The priest would then unbind the woman's hair and place the meal offering in her hands while he held the jar of bitter water. The priest then put the woman under oath. He basically said, "If you are innocent of committing adultery, you will be free from any harmful effects from this water. If you are guilty, however, your belly will swell and your thigh will rot." The woman was then expected to acknowledge her acceptance of God's judgment as revealed through this process.

Next, the priest then wrote the curse on a scroll and immediately blotted it out with the bitter water. The NIV indicates that the blotted ink is scraped into the water. The woman then drank more of the water.

**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:

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

**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.***

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

Once the woman drank the water, the priest took the jealousy offering out of her hand and waved it before the LORD; then he offered it upon the altar. Next, He burned a handful of the offering upon the altar and gave the woman more of the bitter water to drink. If the woman was guilty, the bitter water would cause her belly to swell and her thigh to rot; the woman would effectively be publicly marked as being cursed. If the woman was innocent of the husband's suspicions, she was declared clean and free and able to conceive. This seems to imply that the "rotting thigh and swelling belly" affected the ovaries and uterus and the ability to conceive.

The explicit implication in this whole process is that it is done before the LORD and that the declaration of guilt or innocence is a result of His judgment.

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

**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.**

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

Moses summarizes that this law is a response to jealousy due to infidelity or even suspected infidelity on the part of the wife. When he followed this process, the man was guiltless of any sin. The woman bore the consequences of her sin if shown to be guilty.

The woman in me can't help but wonder why provision isn't made for a wife that is suspicious of her husband. I also wonder why there is no mention made of judgment against the man with whom she committed adultery if shown to be guilty.

I am reminded that in the culture of that day women were not highly esteemed. A woman who was innocent would be grateful to have a system in place that would prove her innocence rather than leave her subject to mistreatment at the hands of a jealous husband.