

## Numbers, Chapters 5-6 / Purification of God's People

### **Read Numbers 5:1-10**

Leviticus chapters 13-15 dealt with leprosy and discharges, how to recognize them and clean them. "Leprosy" could mean any skin infection. Here, the Israelites are reminded that those infected were to remain outside the camp, so they would not defile it "where I dwell in their midst."

Both the skin infections and discharges were visible, outward impurities. The discharges were probably from sexual organs. Touching a dead person was the ultimate tangible sign of uncleanness, because the process of decay was evident to all.

The people who were sent outside the camp were object lessons to the whole camp of the necessity for all people to be "clean" in their approach to God.

### **Read Numbers 5:11-15**

God here moves from dealing with the open, obvious impurities to the more personal, hidden impurity of adultery. Verse 13 specifies that "she had not been caught in the act." If she had, if there were a witness against her, she would come under the law of Leviticus 20:10 (look up).

As it is, the adultery dealt with here is not openly known. She may be guilty, or the husband's suspicions may have been aroused before she has actually committed adultery, or he may be jealous for no reason. In any case, the instruction here that they should come before the priest shows this passage is designed to restore the relationship.

### **Read Numbers 5:16-31**

The "test" here seems harsh, but it provides a rescue for the wife of an angry, jealous husband. Read Proverbs 6:34. The seriousness of the ritual shows the law's regard for marital fidelity. Adultery was an impurity that affected the whole community.

vs. 18 – she should loosen her hair – this was a sign of openness, and for the guilty, an expectation of judgment and mourning.

vs. 27-28 – her thigh will waste away and her abdomen will swell, visible signs and reminders for the whole community. What had been hidden would be visible. She would also be barren, a "curse among her people," a grievous punishment in the ancient world in which bearing children was a woman's greatest honor and source of security.

### **Read Numbers 6:1-12**

A Nazirite was any man or woman who devoted a period of time to the service of the Lord. During the period of consecrated service, three areas of his or her life were governed: diet, appearance, and associations. Every Israelite was regulated in these areas, but for the Nazirite, the regulations were heightened. The purity of the Nazirite was meant to be a challenge to the Israelites to follow God wholeheartedly.

Some Israelites were Nazirites for life, most notably Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. Each of them was born to a woman previously barren, and each was devoted to God's service by his parents before he was born. Judges 13:1-5 (Samson); 1 Samuel 1:4-11 (Samuel); Luke 1:7-16 (John the Baptist).

### **Read Numbers 6:22-27 Aaron's Benediction**

This famous blessing was extended to all Israelites, not just the Nazirites.

"Bless" – God's blessings included good harvests, peace, children, and his own presence (Lev. 26:3-13)

"Keep you" – God would protect and guard them

"Make His face to shine upon you" – A shining face is a smiling face, a pledge of God's good favor

"Countenance" is the face or the expression of one's face. For God to lift up His countenance is to take notice of and treat His people with favor.

"Peace" (Heb. shalom) involves more than the English sense of "lack of war"; it means total well-being.

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1*