

BIBLE CLASS 09.02.2023 LAW STUDY – NUMBERS 5: THE SPIRIT OF JEALOUSY

Dear brothers and sisters,

The fifth chapter of the book of numbers, having escaped Egypt have made their way under the directions given by Yahweh to Moses have encamped in the vicinity of Mount Sinai for two years and two months. They then moved to the vicinity of Mount Horeb where they wandered in the wilderness for 38 years and two months, in which the goodness and severity of God were clearly made known.

Under Yahweh's direction Moses instructed the Israelites to cleanse the camp, not only of disused material and rubbish, but also all those who were suffering from noxious diseases the most feared it seems was leprosy. This disease which seems to have arisen in (Exo 15:26) being inflicted by God as he promised, "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and will do that which is right in his sight, and will give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you, **which I have brought upon the Egyptians:** for I am the LORD that heals you". Leprosy was a living death, for which until comparatively recently there was no known cure. Today Leprosy can be cured but according to the World Health Organisation it still exists in Bangladesh, Brazil, DR Congo, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania. However what is important to understand is that God promised the Israelites that they would be made immune to this disease if they kept his commandments. In the Scriptures Leprosy is described as a living death imposed upon people and their relatives by engaging in wicked practices as indicated in the examples recorded in the scriptures. Therefore everyone who contracted the disease had to be banished from the Camp of Israel. Paul speaks of illicit behaviour "not so much as named among the gentiles" occurring among members of the ecclesia! For this unrepentant act the Apostle Paul commanded that such persons should be disfellowshipped until he repented of his wickedness, in which case he should be restored in love. (1 Corinthians 5:1-5) The law applied to all including everyone who had an issue which were common to Israelites as they are to people today. For Israel the command for those who suffered was withdraw and wash in water until evening, unless it was more serious than that, in which case healing was awaited, or remaining unclean they were required not to associate themselves

until they were healed as defined by the priest. The spiritual lesson is that we do have sinful habits that arise out of ordinary life, but are hidden when in company. In some towns and cities in England as anywhere else, people discard wrappers of all sorts, just chucking it down for someone else to dispose of. Some towns have bins for people to place their wrappers and other items in, and culprits are fined but it doesn't solve the problem all together. Similarly we may have disrespectful habits that can upset others, when in their company we may abstain from the habit until we are alone. But what is required is a cure from that which gives offence. We must not forget that God watched over the camp of **His people**. **He** also watches over **His** Ecclesia taking note of whether each one of us are walking worthily of our calling.

The Law require quite a number of things to be taken out of the camp. Among these are the dwelling place of the Leper (Lev 14:3);
The place where the condemned were slain. Lev24:14.
The place where those defiled were to await their cleansing (Num.5:2-4).
The place where soldiers defiled by death until they were cleansed. (Num31:19)
The place where the ceremonially unclean awaited cleansing. (Deut.23:10-14)
Proselytes such as Rahab and her father's family were kept without the camp for the set period Joshua (6:23)

Besides having issues from which to be cleansed, a person male or female could be defiled by the dead. When a person touched the dead body of another person they were regarded as defiled for seven days. Touching the carcase of an animal defiled a person until evening. The flesh is infected through death reminding us that the whole of humanity is subject to deterioration and death because of sin. In verse 3 we learn that defilement through issues and through diseases affected both male and female, both were put without the camp. Today it is common practice that where infectious diseases are concerned to isolate those affected, but the Law of Moses was the first to require it.

In Leviticus 6 the law was established that if a man lied to his neighbour over safe keeping, or in fellowship, or something taken in violence, deceiving his neighbour or something found which his neighbour lost, and lied about it, or swore about it falsely, it was sinful and against Yahweh for which He demanded recompense. When found out and confessed, the guilty person was charged with 'trespassing against Yahweh'. The offender was required to give compensation to the person defrauded, and to bring an offering to Yahweh.

The compensation was return of the money according to the value of the stolen article plus 20%. The offering required was a ram which would reduce the offender's ability to increase his herds. The slaughtered ram was divided, a portion for a burnt offering, and food for the priests. (Num.5:6). It might be however that the offended person might have died, before recompense could be made, but the offender was not allowed to get away with his fraudulence unpunished. If his victim had died the recompense was given to Yahweh who directed it to be given to the priest.

It is interesting to note that Israel's camp was not only to be kept free of physical defilement, but also mental and moral defilement among the congregation.

Every aspect of an Israelites life was to conform to the will of Yahweh, and as found in the New Testament this included behavior in marriage. So here in the book of Numbers attention is directed to a wife's suspected infidelity. This affected not only married couples, but their standing before Yahweh. For the nation of Israel had entered into a covenant with Yahweh is likened to his Bride. (See the instruction given in Hosea:1-3).

Here in numbers the case is given of a wife who secretly has copulated with a man other than her husband. She has allowed herself to be defiled and her husband does not know but he secretly suspects that she has been unfaithful to him. As a result the spirit of Jealousy comes upon him, and he suspects she might have been defiled on account of her coldness toward him. Jealousy is generally related to something that is evil, but the Hebrew word is closely related to another word and that is 'zealous' which is generally related to an activity that is good. It is important to note that human beings experience jealousy and zeal and these emotions are generally triggered by the impulses of the flesh. But it is not always so for Psalm 69:9 and John 2:17 relate it as referring to the Lord Jesus, "his disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up". (Joh 2:17).

In this case of suspected infidelity the man is required by the law to take his wife to the priest together with an offering, "the tenth part of an ephah of plain barley meal without incense or oil. Oil has significance of joy, while incense signifies prayer. Barley was inexpensive and feed for animals and the poor people. Connected to an offering it signifies humility. The priest was to provide holy water such as the laver in the tabernacle from which dust was to be

gathered from its floor, and sprinkled in the water. The Holy water signifies the Word of God, the dust represents the nature of mankind. It is an offering of memorial bringing iniquity to remembrance. The woman was to be set before Yahweh bringing to remembrance what Yahweh requires of married people. The woman was to uncover her head, so that her hair hung loosely upon her head, which Paul teaches is unseemly before God in the ecclesia.

The priest offered a handful of the barley meal before Yahweh waving it over the altar, indicating the humility of the woman before God. Afterwards it was offered upon the altar. The memorial was a token of the whole amount which was given to the priest, indicating her personal need for a mediator. The bitter water which caused the curse under Yahweh's control was then drunk by her and entering in to her stomach would either pass through her if she was innocent or cause her stomach to swell and her reproductive organs to swell to rot, giving the appearance of child birth, but ultimately stillborn or cancerous.

But if the woman was innocent, she was let go free of the accusation and able to return to her husband and able to bring forth children.

This law was given to Israel to help them realise that the Israelite nation was married to Yahweh, he gave them his true affection and kept his promises, but if they like a discontented wife allowed herself to be enticed committing adultery with the nations and their gods, and they would experience unendurable suffering until they acknowledged their iniquity.

DHH