

Numbers 5

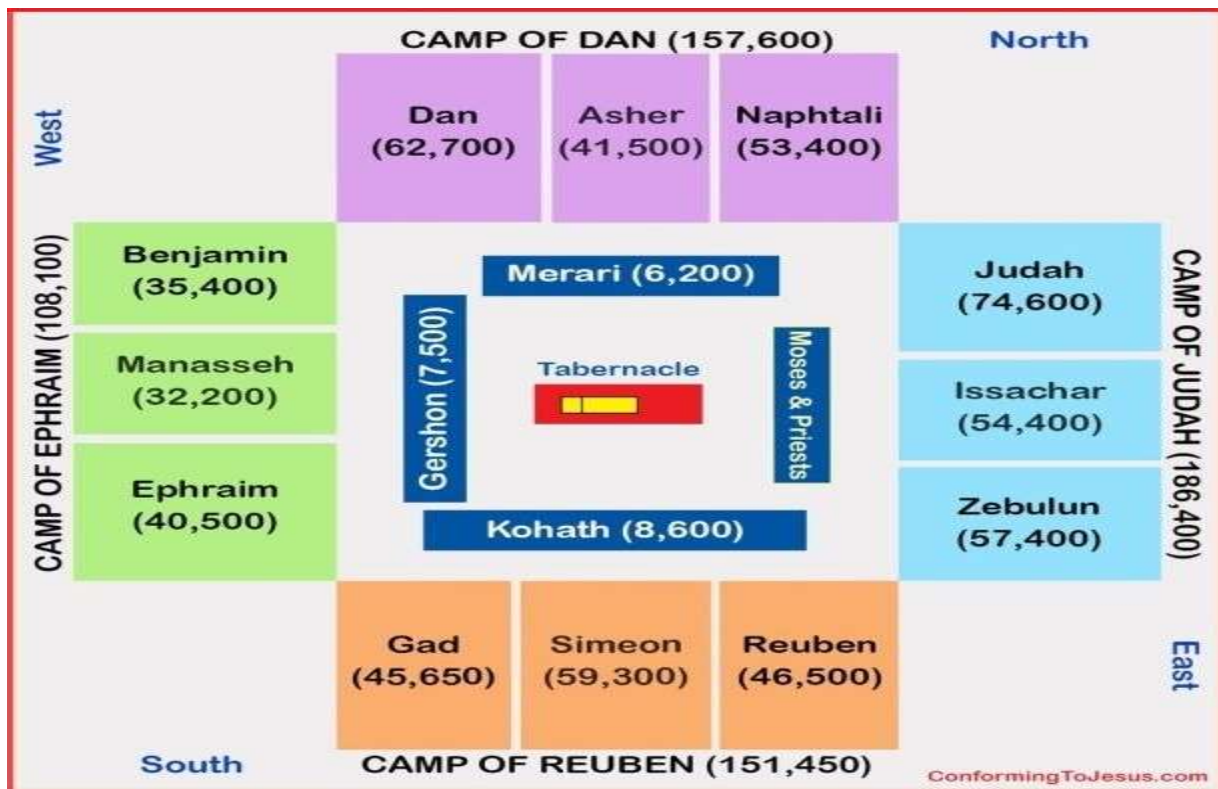
Verses 1 - 4

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Command the sons of Israel that they send away from the camp every leper and everyone having a discharge and everyone who is unclean because of a *dead* person. ³You shall send away both male and female; you shall send them outside the camp so that they will not defile their camp where I dwell in their midst.” ⁴The sons of Israel did so and sent them outside the camp; just as the Lord had spoken to Moses, thus the sons of Israel did.

You shall send away both male and female; you shall send them outside the camp so that they will not defile their camp where I dwell in their midst

The Tabernacle was Gods dwelling place and it was at the very center of the community. So those who were not clean needed to be outside the camp.

See pic 505



But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution which is made for the wrong *must go to the Lord for the priest*

If the owner who was defrauded had died and he had no kinsman, the restitution made by the guilty party would go to the priest.

Verses 11 - 15

¹¹ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘If any man’s wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him, ¹³ and a man has intercourse with her and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband and she is undetected, although she has defiled herself, and there is no witness against her and she has not been caught in the act, ¹⁴ if a spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife when she has defiled herself, or if a spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife when she has not defiled herself, ¹⁵ the man shall then bring his wife to the priest, and shall bring as an offering for her one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall not pour oil on it nor put frankincense on it, for it is a grain offering of jealousy, a grain offering of memorial, a reminder of iniquity.

If a spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife when she has defiled herself

Or if a spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife when she has not defiled herself

Jealousy can be based on fact or in fiction. Either way it needs to be dealt with

The man shall then bring his wife to the priest, and shall bring as an offering for her one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal;

A tenth of an ephah was about seven pints.

He shall not pour oil on it nor put frankincense on it

The usual meal-offering was an occasion of joyful thanksgiving.

But jealousy is bitter so the oil and frankincense was omitted.

Verses 16 - 22

¹⁶ ‘Then the priest shall bring her near and have her stand before the Lord, ¹⁷ and the priest shall take holy water in an earthenware vessel; and he shall take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put *it* into the water. ¹⁸ The priest shall then have the woman stand before the Lord and let *the hair of the woman’s head* go loose, and place the grain offering of memorial in her hands, which is the grain offering of jealousy, and in the hand of the priest is to be the water of bitterness that brings a curse. ¹⁹ The priest shall have her take an oath and shall say to the woman, “If no man has lain with you and if you have not gone astray into uncleanness, *being under the authority of your husband*, be immune to this water of bitterness that brings a curse; ²⁰ if you, however, have gone astray, *being under the authority of your husband*, and if you have defiled yourself and a man other than your husband has had intercourse with you” ²¹ (then the priest shall have the woman swear with the oath of the curse, and the priest shall say to the woman), “the Lord make you a curse and an oath among your people by the Lord’s making your thigh waste away and your abdomen swell; ²² and this water that brings a curse shall go into your stomach, and make your abdomen swell and your thigh waste away.” And the woman shall say, “Amen. Amen.”

The priest shall take holy water in an earthenware vessel;

This is the only use of this expression in the Bible. The Septuagint has pure running water here.

And he shall take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put *it* into the water

Interesting, the Tabernacle was made of the finest materials but the floor was dirt.

The curse on the serpent was that he should eat dust.

See Genesis 3:14

The priest shall have her take an oath, “If no man has lain with you, be immune to this water of bitterness that brings a curse

If the woman was innocent, no harm came to her

If you, however, have gone astray, this water that brings a curse shall go into your stomach, and make your abdomen swell and your thigh waste away

If she was guilty, there would be a very clear sign

Her abdomen would swell

And her thigh would waste away

This test could only work if God intervened. It had to be a miracle.

Verses 23 - 28

²³ 'The priest shall then write these curses on a scroll, and he shall wash them off into the water of bitterness. ²⁴ Then he shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings a curse, so that the water which brings a curse will go into her and *cause* bitterness. ²⁵ The priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy from the woman's hand, and he shall wave the grain offering before the Lord and bring it to the altar; ²⁶ and the priest shall take a handful of the grain offering as its memorial offering and offer *it* up in smoke on the altar, and afterward he shall make the woman drink the water. ²⁷ When he has made her drink the water, then it shall come about, if she has defiled herself and has been unfaithful to her husband, that the water which brings a curse will go into her and *cause* bitterness, and her abdomen will swell and her thigh will waste away, and the woman will become a curse among her people. ²⁸ But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, she will then be free and conceive children.

The priest shall then write these curses on a scroll, and he shall wash them off into the water of bitterness

The ink that was used would color the water adding to the symbolism

The priest shall take a handful of the grain offering and offer *it* up in smoke on the altar, and afterward he shall make the woman drink the water.

Since God is spirit, not flesh and blood, the offering came in the form of smoke.

After the offering was made to God, the woman would drink the water.

If she has defiled herself the woman will become a curse among her people.

The text says “she will become a curse among her people”

Does this mean she will be put to death?

See Deuteronomy 22:22

The sin of adultery was punishable by the death of both individuals

It would have been unfair to condemn only one of the two participants

But if the woman has not defiled herself, she will then be free and conceive children

If she was found innocent there were two blessings.

1. She would be free of any judgment
2. And she would be blessed with children

Verses 29 - 31

²⁹ ‘This is the law of jealousy: when a wife, *being under the authority of her husband, goes astray and defiles herself,* ³⁰ or when a spirit of jealousy comes over a man and he is jealous of his wife, he shall then make the woman stand before the Lord, and the priest shall apply all this law to her. ³¹ Moreover, the man will be free from guilt, but that woman shall bear her guilt.’”

Moreover, the man will be free from guilt, but that woman shall bear her guilt

In either case, if she was guilty or not, the man was free of guilt.

At first glance that may appear unfair, but it is better to deal with unfounded jealousy than to live with suspicion that is unresolved.

The unfairness lies in the fact that the wife was not given this option with her husband.

But we should remember that just as the wife is under the authority of her husband, the husband is under the authority of God.

The husband will answer to God for any wrong behavior.

One last thought on this matter.

Consider how the pagan world treated this problem

Babylonian priests of that time had the following solutions

1. The person being tried was bound with heavy weights and thrown into a river

If he failed to come up he was declared guilty

And if he floated, he was innocent!

2. The person being tried was forced to plunge his hands into boiling water, or compelled to pick up red-hot metal or walk barefooted over burning coals.

If no damage resulted, the person was innocent.

If a severe burn resulted, the person was declared guilty.

Anyone want their system of justice? ☹️ ☹️