

Numbers: Chapter 5 - Keeping the camp holy

- 3 different cases presented
 - unclean persons
 - confession & restitution
 - jealous husband suspicions of wife's adultery
- God instructs Moses & the people on how to handle each one so that the camp is not defiled

5:1-4 - Unclean persons

- leprous (or those with a skin disease)
- has a bodily (genital) discharge
- has had contact w/ a corpse making them unclean

* They get put out of the camp for a while so as not to defile the camp

5:5-10 - Confession & restitution

- when a man or a woman wrongs another they incur guilt & must confess
- they must make full restitution plus add $\frac{1}{5}$ to it & give it to the person wronged or their next of kin
- if no next of kin, then the restitution goes to the priest which he gets to keep since it is restitution for an offense against God

5: 11-31 - jealous husband

- if suspects his wife has been unfaithful, whether or not there is any proof or a witness, & the husband is jealous, he can bring her to the priest to undergo a humiliating ritual
- husband must bring an offering (1/10 of an ephah of barley flour (ephah = 1/2 bushel) w/ no oil & spice (to differentiate it from a regular offering)
- priest mixes holy water w/ dust from the floor
- woman's hair is taken down & disheveled - she is forced to take an oath that she hasn't been unfaithful & forced to drink the water
- if she's guilty or has lied, the curse is that she will become unable to bear children (uterus dropping)
- if she's innocent, all will be well
- there is no punishment for the man even if he is wrong
- modern sensitivities are offended!
- this punishment had faded away by Jesus' time since there was no "dust" on the temple floor

Chapter Six: Nazirites & Priests

- special instructions are given for these two groups
 - Nazirites (who take on special vows in service to God for a ^{specific} ~~period~~ time)
 - priests (who are commanded to bless the people)
- Nazirites - a special order of men and women who wish to dedicate their lives in service to God - for a specific period of time
- during their time of service, they refrain from:
 - drinking the fruit of the grape
 - cutting their hair
 - being in contact w/ corpses, even of family & friends (includes rules for purification if they are defiled)
- after their time of service is completed, there is a specific ceremony for that
- Priests - are commanded to give the people a special blessing (benediction) invoking the name of the Lord over the Israelites (^{exclusive} ~~claim~~)
 - this "priestly benediction" is found in both Jewish & Christian traditions
 - ends w/ "shalom" or peace - God's good gifts of health, prosperity, well-being, friendship, justice & salvation

Chapter 7: 1-89 - offerings of the leaders

- Chronologically is a flashback to a time one month before Numbers begins (the day when Moses finished setting up the Tabernacle)
- we get back to the beginning of Numbers in Chapter 10:11 (so this is a long section in the book)
- the lengthy description of the offerings of the tribes is a part of the ceremony for dedicating the Tabernacle & the altar
- each of the 12 tribal leaders presents the same offering on successive days
- when the dedication is complete, God indicates continued communication with Moses from the seat of the divine presence on the Tabernacle inside the tent of meeting

Chapter Eight: 1-27 More instructions

(still in the flashback period)

8:1-4 - The seven lamps

- Aaron is commanded to light the seven lamps in the sanctuary

(gold, three pairs of branches)

(see Exod 25:31-40 ; 37:17-24)

- This lampstand - menorah - used in Solomon's temple and the Second Temple and continues as a feature in the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah

8:5-26 - consecration of the Levites

- Levites are ritually purified & ceremonially dedicated to 2 major roles

- priestly assistants to the high priest Aaron

- substitutes for the first-born of Israelites

- Cleansing is required because they will be handling holy things

- laying on of hands signals their dedication

- touching the bull transfers sin (atonement)

- Levites surround the sanctuary as a protective measure against the powerful holiness of the space

Chapter Nine: 1-23 - Passover, Cloud & Fire

- a portrait of an obedient Israel
 - faithful observance of the Passover
 - questions of ritual impurity, & aliens participating
 - following the cloud & pillar of fire
- Passover celebration
 - first month, fourteenth day at twilight
 - unless persons or those on a journey could observe it in the second month at its appointed date & time
 - aliens (foreigners who had taken up residence among the Israelites) could participate by following the same rules
- a cloud covered the tabernacle during the day & a pillar of fire (the cloud appeared as fire) at night in order to obscure God's presence
- the cloud/fire was the visible symbol of God's presence with them & an indication of whether they should stay in the camp or continue the march

Chapter Ten: 1-36 - Trumpets & leaving Sinai

10: 1-10 Silver Trumpets

- two trumpets are commanded to be made
- Aaron's priests (his sons) will blow them to summon the people in times of danger, war and festival as well as the breaking of camp & continuing the journey

10: 11-36 Departure from Sinai

- we now are back to the timeframe of the beginning of the book (19 days after the first census & 11 months after the arrival at Sinai (see Exod 19:1)

- wilderness of Sinai is the southern part of the Sinai peninsula - wilderness of Paran is in the northern part & must be crossed in order to reach the southern border of Canaan

- they march in order as outlined in Chaps 2-3

- by relying on the guides from the Midianites/ Kenites, the book emphasizes the cooperation between the divine presence & the wise resources from outside the community