

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM NUMBERS

### "Clean Morals" (1)

Numbers 5:1-31

#### UP TO NOW

1. Numbers is the Bible book about the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness. The point is this: Israel may have had to go through the wilderness, but she didn't have to live there. An 11 day journey became a 40 year nightmare.

Look out!

2. The first four chapters record events of counting and encampment. Seventy people went into Egypt. 430 years later there were 603,550 fighting men, plus women, children, and Levites. Probably  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million all together.

3. Wow, how do people like that live? The present chapter talks about that. Look at the instructions:

1. ABOUT CLEAN PERSONS vv. 1-4.

The key verb here is "put out." It is used three times in these verses (vv. 2, 3, 4). Here is a verb used of David (1 Sam. 20:22), of Adam (Gen. 3:23). It is a decisive act.

a. Who "put out"?

1) Every leper This means someone with an infectious skin disease (cf. Lev. 13; Num. 12:10-16). Some say psoriasis.

2) Every issue (discharge). The obvious intent here is some sexual disease. There is concern for contagiousness. Obviously, not some temporary incident, but long term.

3) Every corpse-defiled. Here is another source of possible infection, but more--it is a break with paganism. Egyptians preserved the body (mummies). Israel was to dispose of it quickly (cf. Lev. 19:18; Deut. 14:1; see also Lev. 21:2, 11; Num. 6:6).

b. Where "put out"?

It is the "camp" (four times in vv. 2, 3, 4) which is involved. Moses was to instruct the "children of Israel." There is no reconstruction of pagans, but cleanness of God's people. "Camp" must be clean!

c. Why "put out"?

The reason is clear: God dwells there. This is "shechinah" presence. The use of the emphatic "I" with the present participle is meaningful--God was in fact there! Oh, what an amazing thought!

NOTE: Scripture records the obedience of Israel (v. 4).

If the Spirit preserved a record of your response to God's Word, what would it be? Positive? Negative? Undecided?

## 2. ABOUT CLEAN RELATIONSHIPS vv. 5-10

The key word here is "trespass." Two specific constructions are used. One (v. 6) means to deal treacherously while the other means to fail in duty (vv. 7, 8).

### a. Who "trespasses"?

Person may be male or female (v. 6). Must be guilty. Individuality is stressed by use of "person" (Hebrew: "soul").

### b. What to do about trespasses"?

1) Confess sin (v. 7). The verb "done" shows specific confession. Nothing generic. The kinds of things involved are listed in Lev. 6:1-7: lying, violence, deceit, mistreatment of deposits, retaining something found, etc.

2) Compensate (v. 7). The amount is listed as 20% in addition to the item or principal.

3) Convey (v. 7). Actual transmission of goods is involved. No way to avoid delivery (v. 7). Where there is no kins person, conveyance must be to the Lord. Hence, sin against man is sin against God (Psa. 51:4). The priest can then claim this as his own (vv. 9, 10).

### c. Why perform for trespasses"?

The O.T. word for "atonement" is "covering." This is what the ritual here provides (v. 8). God must have sin covered by sacrifice (note: "ram" in v. 8).

Consider: With Israel in the wilderness there were to be no squabbles over property. What a lesson for our material-crazy generation!

### BOTTOM LINE

John Wesley said: cleanliness is next to godliness. Scripture says: cleanliness is part of godliness. So be it!