Refreshed IN THE WORD
For thy word hath quickened me
PSALM 119:50

Torah Studies

Connecting the Torah and Jesus

STUDY 33

Tell the Truth and Make Things Right

Numbers · Lesson 5 · Chapter 5

Learning to Walk with Our Father. Learn about holiness, honest confession, and repairing harm, with careful guidance through a difficult chapter.

For personal reading and study with friends

King James Version · Complete Scripture passages

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Read one section at a time. Take turns reading the verses aloud, discuss the questions, and choose one practical response. Every passage referenced in the teaching is included in full.

Let’s begin together

Father, give us honest hearts and patient minds. Help us understand difficult passages, tell the truth, and care for people we have hurt. Lead us in the mercy and faithfulness of Jesus. In His name, amen.

Numbers 5 moves from the work of the tabernacle to life in the camp. It addresses ritual purity, making payment for a wrong, and an ancient procedure involving suspected unfaithfulness in marriage. These are different matters. We should not treat sickness, an accusation, and proven wrongdoing as if they were the same.

A caring father teaches children to say what is true, admit when they are wrong, and help repair the damage. He also teaches them that a suspicion is not proof. We will read this chapter in its ancient setting, then listen to Jesus and the apostles about a life of truth and mercy.

Main truth: God calls us to live truthfully, take responsibility for harm, and treat others with care.

1. Understand ritual purity

Numbers 5:1-4

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead:

3 Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell.

4 And the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp: as the LORD spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel.

The camp surrounded God’s dwelling. These instructions concern ritual uncleanness from certain skin conditions, bodily discharges, or contact with the dead. “Ritual” means connected to the rules for sacred worship. This kind of uncleanness was not automatically a personal moral failure.

These were boundaries in ancient Israel's camp under the Sinai covenant. They do not tell Christian families to reject a sick person or assume that illness proves hidden sin. We can respect the chapter's concern for holiness while remembering that a person's condition does not erase their worth.

2. Confession includes responsibility

Numbers 5:5-7

5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

6 Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty;

7 Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed.

Now the chapter addresses an actual wrong. The person must confess it, return what is owed, and add one fifth. One fifth is twenty percent: if the amount owed were ten, two more would be added. The payment goes to the person who was wronged. Saying “I’m sorry” must not become a way to avoid repairing harm.

Numbers 5:8-10

8 But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the LORD, even to the priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him.

9 And every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring unto the priest, shall be his.

10 And every man's hallowed things shall be his: whatsoever any man giveth the priest, it shall be his.

If there is no relative to receive the payment in the situation described, it goes to the Lord through the priest. The passage also describes the priest's portion of holy gifts. The person who did wrong cannot simply keep what should be returned. Worship and responsibility toward others belong together.

For a child, this principle can be simple: tell the truth about what happened, apologize without excuses, and help put things right. If you damaged something, ask how you can help repair it. If you spread an untrue story, correct it with the people who heard it.

3. A suspicion is not proof

Numbers 5:11-15

11 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

12 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man’s wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him,

13 And a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and there be no witness against her, neither she be taken with the manner;

14 And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled:

15 Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance.

This section concerns a husband who suspects his wife of breaking the marriage promise of faithfulness. Verse 14 includes two possibilities: she may be guilty, or she may be innocent. His jealousy alone does not tell us which is true. The text describes bringing the matter to a priest.

This procedure is not equal for husband and wife: the wife is the person placed under this test. We should acknowledge that difficult feature of the ancient law. We should also read what the text actually says, without making the husband's suspicion into evidence of guilt.

Numbers 5:16-22

16 And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD:

17 And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water:

18 And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse:

19 And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse:

20 But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband:

21 Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The LORD make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the LORD doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell;

22 And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot: And the woman shall say, Amen, amen.

The priest brings the woman before the Lord, prepares the water, and places her under an oath. An oath is a solemn statement made with God as witness. The words describe freedom from the curse if she is innocent and serious judgment if she is guilty.

The bodily language in verses 21 and 22 is difficult. We can say clearly that the passage describes a curse affecting her body. We should not pretend it gives us a modern medical diagnosis. Its setting is a priestly ritual of judgment in ancient Israel.

4. Read the outcome carefully

Numbers 5:23-28

23 And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water:

24 And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter.

25 Then the priest shall take the jealousy offering out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the offering before the LORD, and offer it upon the altar:

26 And the priest shall take an handful of the offering, even the memorial thereof, and burn it upon the altar, and afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water.

27 And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that, if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people.

28 And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed.

The priest writes the curse, washes the words into the water, and presents the offering. The passage then describes the outcome according to guilt or innocence. Verse 28 explicitly allows for the woman to be innocent and free. We must not leave that possibility out of our reading.

Numbers 5:29-31

29 This is the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled;

30 Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law.

31 Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity.

These closing verses summarize the ancient procedure. They do not make every jealous feeling correct or give families a command to repeat the ritual. No spouse or parent should use this chapter to force someone to drink something, threaten them, or act as their judge.

A lesson for our conversations is to separate what we know from what we fear. Do not spread accusations as facts. When trust is damaged, seek truth with care and get responsible help. If someone is being threatened or harmed, protecting that person comes first.

5. Jesus brings a changed life

Luke 19:1-7

1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

Zacchaeus was a wealthy chief tax collector. Jesus called him by name and went to his home. The people complained about Jesus receiving a sinner. But Jesus' welcome was the beginning of an encounter that touched Zacchaeus's choices and the people affected by them.

Luke 19:8-10

8 And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Zacchaeus offered to give to the poor and repay four times what he had taken dishonestly. That amount is different from the one fifth in Numbers 5. We should not combine them into one payment rule for every situation. The shared principle is that a changed heart takes the harm done to others seriously.

Jesus says He came to seek and save the lost. Zacchaeus's payment was not a price that purchased Jesus' love. His response shows that receiving Jesus affects how we treat people and handle what belongs to them.

Ephesians 4:25-32

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

27 Neither give place to the devil.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Paul gives the church a clear path: stop lying, stop stealing, speak words that help, and practice kindness and forgiveness. He grounds forgiveness in what God has done for us in Christ. We can tell the truth and face wrongdoing while still refusing cruelty and revenge.

Talk it over together

1. Why should we distinguish ritual uncleanness from a personal moral failure?

2. What does Numbers 5:7 teach about going beyond an apology?

3. Why is it important that the chapter includes the possibility of the woman's innocence?

4. What changes does Paul describe in Ephesians 4? Which one can you practice today?

Practice it this week

Think of one wrong you need to address. Say honestly what you did, listen to the person you hurt, and choose a practical step to repair the harm. If you are a child, ask a trusted adult to help. Also choose one conversation in which you will speak only what you know is true.

A verse to carry with you

Ephesians 4:32

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

The mercy we receive in Christ teaches us to treat others with mercy and truth.

Let’s pray together

Father, help us be honest without being harsh. Give us courage to confess, wisdom to repair harm, and patience to listen. Keep us from careless accusations. Thank You for seeking and saving us through Jesus. Teach our families to walk in truth, mercy, and faithful love. In Jesus’ name, amen.

I love you, my friends.

Scripture and sources

Scripture text was checked against the King James Version published by eBible.org. The complete verses are reproduced with their historical wording. Verse numbers and layout are adapted for reading; editorial footnotes are omitted. Tap any Scripture reference to view its source.

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