

removal was vital to the Israelites in the wilderness both from a hygienic and from a ceremonial viewpoint.

Touching a dead body made one ritually unclean. God wished to indicate that His people should be completely separate from sin and defilement. In addition there was a hygienic purpose, to hinder the spread of disease. It was also important to make a sharp break, in order that people should recognize that when a person has died the spirit has gone to be with the Lord, and the body is no longer something beautiful, but rather something that is laid aside. This would prevent wrong attitudes toward the dead.

b. Removal of the guilt of trespass (5:-10)

Trespass (6). Heb. ma'al. This word implies stealth or secrecy. Cf. its use in verses 12 and 27 below. The law given here presupposes the portion of the permanent priestly law contained in Lev. 6:1-7. Full details are not now repeated, but the penalties of the law are restated in order to ensure removal of this type of defilement from the camp. A new feature is also added, providing for a special situation which might occasionally arise. Suppose that the man against whom the trespass has been committed can no longer be found and that there is no kinsman who would have the right to receive what is due him. In such a case the trespass and the accompanying penalties must be paid to the priest, as the Lord's representative. In order to avoid any misunderstanding verses 9-10 state plainly that the offerings and other things given become the property of the priest.

Here is a lesson for the Christian. He should have absolute probity in his dealings with all men. If he has defrauded and injured others before he was won to the Lord, it is his duty to make full restitution, as far as possible.