

c. The law of jealousy (5:11-31)

1. The cause of the jealousy (5:11-15). This interesting passage deals with a type of defilement that constitutes a special threat to the peace and progress of the camp. Two possible conditions are involved. Either a woman has been unfaithful but there are no witnesses, and her husband is jealous (12-14a); or the woman is innocent and the husband is jealous without cause (14b). It is a matter which cannot be determined by evidence. Yet it is necessary that the problem be settled. Regardless of whether the woman is guilty or innocent, harm is done by the jealousy itself, and the resulting suspicion and misunderstanding can easily become a source of grievous injury to the family and to the entire camp.

An offering/ (15). Since the sin is not only against the husband or wife, as the case may be, but also against the Lord, an offering is required. Similarly in every aspect of the life of the Christian it is important that he pay attention to the offering which Christ made of Himself on the cross. The atonement is the very foundation of the Christian life and must never be left out of account.

2. The test of guilt (5:16-31). These verses give detailed instructions for a test which the priest is to perform to determine whether the woman is guilty or not, and thus to put an end to the situation of jealousy and suspicion. This test seems strange to many today. In modern times it is usually found that physical causes have physical results regardless of the moral and spiritual situation back of them. It is not expected that the physical situation of a woman who has been unfaithful in her marital relations will necessarily be different from that of one who has been faithful to her husband.

It is sometimes said that this test was a primitive practice common to Israel's neighbors and of animistic origin. Actually there is no