

**A Holy Nation**

Passages: Num 5; Lev 6:1–7

*Memory Verse*

“For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:45)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Works [Behavior]</b>
1. God is holy, and His people needed to be holy for Him to dwell among them. 2. The purpose of the Mosaic laws was to transform the Israelites into a holy nation.	God is holy.	Transform our thoughts and become holy by meditating on and memorizing God’s word.

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Holiness in the Camp
- B. Holiness Among the People
- C. Holiness in the Family

**Life Application: Small Thoughts, Big Differences**

- 1. Capturing Negative and Sinful Thoughts
- 2. Memorize and Meditate on the Bible

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** We no longer need to follow the Mosaic laws, but we should still follow the teachings and the spirit behind them by transforming our thoughts and becoming a holy nation.

### **Introduction**

After their miraculous departure from Egypt, the Lord led the Israelites to Mount Sinai, where they camped at its base. There, God began to give them His laws. Whenever we read them, the Books of Numbers and Leviticus seem to be all about rules, rules, and more rules! Why did God give the Israelites so many regulations? How were they supposed to follow all of them, and why were they so important?

On a physical level, all of the sanitary, dietary, and ceremonial laws preserved the health and hygiene of the entire camp. By following these regulations, they could stay physically healthy and avoid disease and infection as they journeyed through the wilderness. On a spiritual level, however, God was trying to teach the Israelites what kind of God He was and express the expectations that He had for them. The Lord who brought them out of Egypt was a holy God, and His people also needed to be holy for Him to dwell in their midst.

### **A. Holiness in the Camp**

Let's first read Numbers 5:1–5 to see how the camp was to remain holy. One of the ways the Israelites was to maintain holiness in the camp was by separating certain people from the main body of the camp. Anyone who had come into contact with leprosy, discharge, or corpses, was to be isolated in certain ways. Let's examine each and try to understand the meaning behind them.

#### **1. Leprosy**

Leprosy is a disease commonly mentioned in the Bible. First, what exactly is leprosy? In biblical times, people dreaded this disease the most. It was incurable, extremely contagious, and it often led to death. The disease would start to show itself in the skin before spreading and attacking other parts of the body such as the hands, feet, or face. Sometimes, the victim's limbs would become twisted and permanently disfigured.

For example, fingers that curled to form a "claw" hand was a common characteristic among lepers. The disease also affected the victim's nerves, making them lose all sense of pain. As a result, they would often injure themselves without even realizing it. Leprosy was so contagious that God commanded all lepers to be immediately removed and confined outside the camp.

This terrible disease is often used by the Bible as an illustration of sin. Sin, like leprosy, is contagious, and it can slowly eat away at our spiritual life. When the sin becomes habit, we become desensitized to God's words and the movement of the Spirit. Eventually, this lack of sensitivity to sin may lead to spiritual death (cf. 1 Tim 4:1–2; Jas 1:15).

#### **2. Discharge**

In the Bible, "discharge" referred to unclean fluids and substances from the body. Spiritually, this refers to the evil thoughts and desires that come from our hearts. Jesus once explained to His disciples that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man" (Mt 15:19–20). The Lord was trying to teach them that if our hearts are good, then our words and actions will also be good. But if our hearts are wicked and unclean, then our words and actions will reflect this.

But why were the Israelites commanded to isolate everyone who had discharge? Like leprosy, there was a chance that it could contaminate others. And in the same way, a person's wicked actions can easily influence and affect others. We need to be careful to guard our hearts and

purge any evil thoughts and desires. At the same time, we also need to guard ourselves against the negative influences of others in our lives.

### **3. Corpses**

Dead bodies, if left unburied, are a source of disease and sickness. Especially when bacteria begin to consume the corpse and it starts to rot. Besides the bad stench, leaving a corpse in the open meant risking contamination, especially if the dead had a contagious disease. Because of this, God instructed that the dead be removed from the camp, and any who touched a dead person was considered defiled until the person was ceremonially cleansed.

Those who are spiritually dead are those who are live in sin and have no relationship with God. They follow the things of the world and uphold material values rather than spiritual. As children of God, we should always strive to follow His word, but it is easy to become influenced by the views and values of the world. For example, social media, movies, music, or ungodly friends all have the potential to alter our minds and hearts.

## **B. Holiness Among the People**

Let's now read Numbers 5:5–10 and Leviticus 6:1–7. With two million people living in such proximity, it was inevitable that they would commit sins against one another. These two passages record what a person needed to do in order to make up for a wrong they committed against their neighbor. The passage in Leviticus gives more specific details about what they had to do to make up for specific offenses, such as lying about something entrusted to them, or finding a lost article without returning it. They had to:

- Pay for or return the original goods
- Pay an additional 1/5<sup>th</sup> (20%) in interest
- Offer it to the priests if no one claimed the repayment
- Make a sin offering

There are many similar passages in the Mosaic laws regarding how the Israelites were supposed to treat each other. Although we no longer need to follow such specific rules, we still need to understand their teachings and follow the spirit behind each of them.

### **1. When we offend our brother, we offend God**

Let's read Leviticus 6:1–2 again. "[A] person sins and commits a trespass against the LORD by lying to his neighbor[.]" This phrase makes it clear that when we commit a sin against someone, we are also committing a sin against God. In His parables about the kingdom of heaven, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples that, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Mt 25:40). In other words, the way we treat others affects our relationship with God.

### **2. True repentance requires action**

One of the hardest parts of repentance is the act of first confessing that we have done something wrong. We don't like being in the wrong, and our pride often makes us fail to admit our mistakes. But to live in harmony, we must set aside our pride and remember that God loves those who are humble at heart.

### **3. With peace, there is holiness**

God gave many different rules about how His people should make up for their mistreatment of

their neighbors. He clearly wants us to live in harmony with each other. This is because when we strive for peace and harmony, we become more holy. Hebrews 12:14 says, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” When there is strife or discord between members, negative feelings, such as resentment, hatred, anger, and bitterness, will arise. These feelings create schisms in our relationships with both men and God. Therefore, it is important to be proactive in resolving any misunderstandings and offenses, so that these do not create a breach in our relationships or the church.

### **Testimony**

A sister who was a church council member had many things to attend to each Sabbath. She greeted members, spoke to truth-seekers, made sure the services ran smoothly, and so on. At the end of one Sabbath, she was informed that a church sister was upset with her because the council member did not greet her. The council member could not recall having ignored the sister. She could have felt that this was no fault of hers and could have accused the sister of being petty. However, to maintain the peace and to prevent it from escalating into something bigger, she decided to make amends with the sister. She purchased a small gift and paid her a visit. During the visit, although the matter was not explicitly addressed, peace and harmony was restored.

### **C. Holiness in the Family**

With the creation of Eve, the Lord established a holy union between man and woman. The two would join and become one. They were not to separate. But upon the entry of sin into the world, this union became endangered. Problems began to arise, including unfaithfulness. Numbers, chapter 5, explains what the Israelites were to do if a husband suspected that his wife had been unfaithful to him, but had no concrete evidence. The passage outlines the steps to take “if the spirit of jealousy comes upon [the husband],” even though he is not certain that she has been unfaithful. Before we continue examining this passage, how would you define “jealousy”? (*Allow students to answer.*)

There are two different types of jealousy. It can be either healthy or unhealthy and, in the context of marriage, can either help or hinder a couple’s relationship. The healthy type of jealousy safeguards our marriage. It means that we care about the marriage, that we are committed to the relationship, and that we want it to work. This type of jealousy helps us to deal with issues in our relationship before they become major problems.

The unhealthy type of jealousy tends to surface when we feel pitiful, inadequate, insecure, or possessive. This type of jealousy can destroy relationships. For this reason, God gave the Israelites a way with which to handle such jealousy when it arises. When left to fester, it can damage, or even break a relationship. Let’s read the full passage in Numbers 5:11–31 and go over each of the steps required.

- The man shall bring his wife to the priest for God to judge.
- They shall bring a grain offering without oil and frankincense. This is because oils were normally added for its pleasing aroma (Lev 2:1). In this case, there is no pleasing aroma in the sacrifice because of the feelings of jealousy and bitterness.
- The woman was to drink bitter water to determine whether she was guilty. If innocent, she would not be cursed. If guilty, she would become sick and cursed among the people.
- The priest would take the grain offering of jealousy and give it as a wave offering to the Lord. He would then take a handful and burn it on the altar.

This passage provides several teachings, not all of which only apply to marriage. We can apply the same principles to our relationships outside of marriage, such as within our family or among our fellow brothers and sisters in church.

**1. Bring our problems to the Lord**

When we face difficulties or problems with our parents, siblings, friends, or church brethren, we need to bring them to the Lord. If, in the future, we ever face doubt or distrust in our marriage, this is also a step that we need to take. Through prayers, and by seeking out His will in the Bible, we can find ways to resolve our issues. We can also seek support and counseling from ministers or our RE teachers. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can get rid of any negative feelings or thoughts and work towards building a trusting and healthy relationship with our family members.

**2. Keep the marriage holy**

The Lord created marriage as a sacred alliance between man and woman. It is important to protect and safeguard our marriage by never allowing any third party to enter. In the same way, as the bride of Christ, we need to learn to keep our hearts rooted in Christ. When we allow other things to take hold of our lives, such as our hobbies, games, or even other people, then we are endangering our relationship with God.

**3. Nothing is hidden from God**

This set of instructions reminds us that even though other people may be unaware of our sins, any secret deeds that we perform are seen by God. The Bible says, “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Prov 15:3). The Bible also teaches us that one day, all hidden things will be revealed (1 Cor 4:5). With this in mind, we should act in such a way so that we have no reason to be ashamed of our actions (2 Tim 2:15). To do so, we must walk as children of light (Eph 5:8).

Like the other laws we examined, all these rules were set by God so that we can remain holy. We no longer need to obey the letter of these laws, but God still wants us to understand and follow the spirit behind each of them: to be a holy nation. This means we need to learn to separate ourselves from the rest of the world, maintain peace and harmony within our church, and guard our relationships, both with our family and with the Lord.

*Check for Understanding*

- 1. What does leprosy represent in the Bible? Explain why.** It is often used as an illustration of sin. Sin, like leprosy, is contagious and can slowly eat away at our spiritual life. When the sin becomes a habit, we become desensitized to God’s words and the movement of the Spirit. Eventually, this lack of sensitivity to sin may lead to spiritual death.
- 2. What three lessons can we learn from the laws regarding the repayment of stolen goods in Leviticus 6:1–7?** When we offend our brother, we offend God; true repentance requires action; and with peace, there is holiness.
- 3. What happens when there is strife or discord between church members?** These feelings create schisms in our relationships with both men and God.
- 4. Describe two different types of jealousy in the context of marriage.** Healthy jealousy means that we care about the marriage, are committed to the relationship, and want it to work. It helps to deal with issues in our relationship before they become major problems. Unhealthy jealousy surfaces

when we feel pitiful, inadequate, insecure, or possessive. This type of jealousy can destroy relationships.

### Life Application

#### Small Thoughts, Big Differences

There is a quote from an unknown author that says, “Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.” In other words, our thoughts are the father of our deeds; before we do something, we need to have thought about it first. Let’s look up a few examples in the Bible to see how thoughts directly influence actions.

Character	Bible Passage	What were the thoughts?	What action(s) were taken?
Eve	Gen 3:6	She saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food, was pleasant to the eyes, and would make her wise.	She plucked the fruit and ate it, then gave it to Adam to eat, too.
Judas	Jn 12:6; Mk 14:10–11	Judas allowed greed to fester in his heart.	Judas stole from the coinbox and betrayed the Lord for thirty pieces of silver.
Bar-Jesus	Acts 13:6–11	He was full of deceit, an enemy of the truth.	He opposed the apostles and sought to turn the proconsul away from the truth.
David	1 Sam 24:2–7	David firmly believed that Saul was God’s anointed.	Regardless of how much he suffered at the hands of Saul, David did not kill Saul when he had the chance, nor did he allow others to strike Saul down.
Caleb	Num 13:30; 14:6–8; Josh 14:10–14	Caleb firmly believed in God’s promise that He would give to the Israelites the land of Canaan and would help them conquer their enemies to acquire the land.	Caleb held onto God’s promise for forty-five years, and when the Israelites eventually entered Canaan, he received his inheritance.

From these examples, we can see that their thoughts affected their actions, and their actions ultimately reflected their relationship with God. While living in Egypt for 400 years, the Israelites had adopted the thoughts, customs, and practices of the Egyptians. This reflected their lack of a relationship with God. He needed to re-educate His people and make them His holy nation. To do so, He gave them laws and statutes that would help them transform their thoughts, so that their actions would become more holy. In the same way, our first step to becoming holy is to change our thoughts. This is not an easy thing, especially if we have been continuously taught to think and do things in a certain way. So, what can we do to change how we think?

#### 1. Capturing Negative and Sinful Thoughts

Oftentimes, sinful and ungodly thoughts creep into our minds without our even realizing it. If we continue to entertain these thoughts, they can become a part of us. So, how do we rid ourselves of

sinful thoughts? Let's read 2 Corinthians 10:4–5. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." We need to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." To do so, we need to first identify the thoughts that we need to capture and remove. Take a moment to reflect on yourselves. Then, from a list, circle which negative and sinful thoughts you need to bring into captivity.

*(Teachers: Makes copies of the list below to hand out to your students for this activity.)*

Anger	Envy/jealousy	Materialism
Bad language	Flirtation	Pride/boasting
Blame	Hatred	Procrastination
Bitterness	Hopelessness	Rebellion
Complaints	Impatience	Resentment
Compromise	Impulsiveness	Revenge
Covetousness	Laziness	Stubbornness
Criticizing	Lies	Unbelief
Defiance	Loneliness	Unforgiving
Discouragement	Low self-esteem	
Despair	Lustful thoughts	

## 2. Memorize and Meditate on the Bible

To counter the negative thoughts that we have identified, we must learn to replace them. This means filling our minds with godly thoughts instead, to crowd out and eventually eliminate the sinful ones. This means studying, storing, memorizing, and internalizing God's words. Why is it so important to memorize God's words?

- It is a defense against sin (Ps 119:11)
- It can help us discern the thoughts and intents of our hearts (Heb 4:12)
- It gives us wisdom and understanding (Ps 119:98–99)
- It instructs us in righteousness and good works for our salvation (2 Tim 3:16–17)
- Memorizing Scripture is part of our calling as God's children (Col 3:16; Deut 6:6–9)

Now that we understand why it's so important, what methods can we use to memorize God's words?

*(Allow students to come up with ideas.)*

### a. Choose a verse that speaks to you

Think of a negative thought that you have or a weakness that you need to improve upon, then choose a verse that targets those areas. It is easier to memorize a verse when it is relevant to us and when it touches our hearts.

### b. Write it down

Don't just write it once. Write it many times! Physically writing out words is an extremely useful and proven memory aid.

### c. Incorporate the verse into your prayers

When you pray, include elements of the verse in your words to God. Ask God to help you fix the verse in your heart and mind so that you can understand and apply the verse to your life.

### d. Put it everywhere!

Write the verse on sticky notes and place them anywhere that ensures you will see it many times throughout the day. This could be on your phone's background, on your monitor, your desk, or even your bathroom mirror. Maybe force yourself to remember it by applying it to your password – create your password by taking the first letter of each word of the verse and,

instead of selecting the “remember password” option, type in the password each time. Change your password once you have memorized the verse well!

**e. Set it to music**

If you remember lyrics better than spoken words, try setting the verse to a simple tune or rhythm.

**f. Challenge yourself**

Instead of wasting precious time mindlessly browsing the web, use technology to your advantage. There are many good apps which can help you memorize Bible verses.

### *Memory Verse*

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“For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:45)

### **Meaning**

It was the Lord who delivered the Israelites from a life of bitterness and slavery. He knew their sorrows, heard their cry, and saw their oppression. In response, He broke the yokes of their cruel taskmasters from their necks and delivered them even before the Israelites knew Him. But God did not only liberate them from slavery.

What made the Israelites His chosen people was the fact that He had chosen to be their God. They would be God’s own special people, His holy nation, and His treasure. They would receive His blessings and protection. In exchange for this special privilege, the Israelites must abide by the commandments that God gave them. Like a parent with a child, God used His laws to guide, teach, and discipline His people, so that they could be holy as God is holy.

### *Conclusion*

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The laws and regulations outlined in the Mosaic books seem to be oppressive and binding. But from the examples we studied today, we can see that their purpose was to transform the Israelites’ thoughts so that they could become a holy nation, God’s own chosen people. We no longer need to follow these laws, but we should still follow the teachings and the spirit behind them by transforming our thoughts and becoming a holy nation. This means we need to learn to separate ourselves from the rest of the world, maintain peace and harmony within our church, and guard our relationships, both with our family and with the Lord.



Lesson 7 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What special privilege did the Israelites receive? How were they to receive this?  
*They would be God's own special people, His holy nation, and His treasure. They would receive His blessings and protection only if they abided by the commandments that God gave them.*
2. "For out of the \_\_\_\_\_ proceed evil \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, adulteries, fornications, thefts, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, blasphemies. These are the things which \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_ [.]" (Matthew 15:19–20a)  
*heart, thoughts, murders, false, witness, defile, man.*
3. Pick one of the ways the Israelites kept the camp holy and explain its spiritual teachings.  
*See Spiritual Teachings, Section A: Holiness in the Camp.*
4. Why is it important to strive for peace? What happens if we don't?  
*Where there is peace, there is holiness. When there is strife or discord, negative feelings, such as resentment, hatred, anger, and bitterness, will arise. These feelings create schisms in our relationships with both men and God.*
5. What was the purpose of the laws that God gave to the Israelites?  
*God was trying to teach the Israelites what kind of God He was, and express the expectations that He had for them. He wanted to transform their thoughts and to turn them into a holy nation.*
6. Why is it so important that we control our thoughts?  
*Because our thoughts are the father of our deeds. To do something, we need to have thought about it first.*
7. What sinful or negative thought(s) do you need to bring into captivity? Pick a verse to help you transform the negative thought(s) into a godly one and write it down below.  
*Personal answers.*