

**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>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. God is holy, and His people needed to be holy for Him to dwell among them.</li><li>2. The purpose of the Mosaic laws was to transform the Israelites into a holy nation.</li></ol>	God is holy.	Living a holy life means removing anything that is eating away at our spiritual life, avoiding anything that is spiritually unclean, and cutting out any worldly values or principles that are dead to God.

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Holiness in the Camp
  1. Leprosy
  2. Discharge
  3. Corpses
- B. Holiness Among the People
  1. When we offend our brother, we offend God
  2. True repentance requires action
  3. With peace, there is holiness

**Life Application**

1. What Does it Mean to Live a Holy Life?
2. Becoming a Holy Nation

**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**

*(Teachers: Consider showing photos of leprosy cases for this portion of the lesson.)*

Leprosy is a disease commonly mentioned in the Bible (see Lev 14 for more details). First, what exactly is leprosy? In biblical times, people dreaded this disease the most. 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. 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. It was also extremely contagious and often led to death. Leprosy was so contagious that God commanded all lepers to be immediately removed and confined outside the camp.

### **2. Discharge**

In the Bible, "discharge" referred to unclean fluids and substances from the body. "When any man has a discharge from his body, his discharge *is* unclean. And this shall be his uncleanness in regard to his discharge—whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is stopped up by his discharge, it *is* his uncleanness" (Lev 15:2–3). 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.

### **3. Corpses**

"He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; *then* he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean" (Num 19:11–12). 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 living in sin and have no relationship with God. They follow the things of the world and uphold material values rather than spiritual.

## **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 close 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.*

Like the other laws we examined, all these rules were set by God so that we can remain holy. Our goal is to be a holy nation. This means that we need to learn how to separate ourselves from the ideologies and unclean practices of this world. Becoming a holy nation means that we as individuals need to have a renewed mind so that we can maintain holiness within the church. To pursue holiness in the camp and among the people, we need to bring our problems to God and solve them in a way that is fitting for children of light (Eph 5:8).

### **Check for Understanding**

---

- 1. What was leprosy and why was it so dreaded in Old Testament times?** It was a deadly disease that first showed itself on the skin before spreading and attacking other parts of the body, sometimes leading to disfigurement. It was highly contagious, so God commanded that all lepers be immediately confined outside the camp.
- 2. What is “discharge” and what does this refer to spiritually?** It referred to unclean fluids and substances from the body. Spiritually, this refers to the evil thoughts and desires that come from our hearts.
- 3. What does it mean to be spiritually dead?** Those who are spiritually dead are those who are living in sin and have no relationship with God.
- 4. 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.
- 5. From the laws that we learned today, what is our goal as God’s children, and how do we accomplish it?** Our goal is to be a holy nation. This means that we need to learn how to separate ourselves from the ideologies and unclean practices of this world.

### **Life Application**

---

#### **1. What Does it Mean to Live a Holy Life?**

We all know the word “holiness” means to be “set apart,” and the book of Numbers contained strict guidelines regarding holiness in the camp. It was very important to God that His people remain separate from the world, so we also need to concern ourselves with purity. We learned a lot of things about how the Israelites had to keep themselves holy, so how do we apply these teachings? Let’s start with a check-up on our own holiness.

##### **a. Leprosy**

We learned earlier that leprosy is often used by the Bible as an illustration of sin. Like leprosy, sin is contagious, and it can slowly eat away at our spiritual life. When 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).

- Can you name one thing that is eating away at your spiritual life? Do you have any worldly habits or influences that are slowly eroding your spirituality?  
*(Allow students to discuss and share. Examples may be social media, violent games, crude language from ungodly friends.)*

**b. Discharge**

Spiritually, this refers to the evil thoughts and desires that come from our hearts. If our hearts are good, then our words and actions will also be good. On the other hand, if our hearts are wicked and unclean, our words and actions will reflect this. The Israelites were to isolate anyone with discharge because, like leprosy there was a chance that it could contaminate others, and it was also considered “unclean.” And in the same way, a person’s wicked actions can easily influence and affect others. We need to remain holy by guarding our hearts and purging any evil thoughts and desires.

- If you were to look back at this past week, how many thoughts and desires did you have that you knew were against God’s word? What were they? Can you explain where these thoughts and desires came from, or where they originated?  
*(Allow students to discuss and share. For younger students answers may be simpler, such as refusing to do homework or cheating on a test. For older more mature students, example answers may be staying up all night to play games, bullying someone at school or online, or actively disobeying their parents in more serious ways.)*

**c. Corpses**

Corpses refer to those who are spiritually dead, or things which have no relationship with God. The spiritually dead follow the things of the world, and uphold material values rather than spiritual. It is very easy for us to be affected or influenced by the views and values of the world, and our minds are often altered by social media, movies, or ungodly friends even without our realization. But as children of God, we need to strive to uphold God’s principles instead of the world’s, and live out God’s values, not mankind’s.

- Are there any worldly values, principles, or ideologies that you consider normal and acceptable, yet are considered ‘spiritually dead’ by God?  
*(Allow students to discuss and share. This question may be difficult for younger students, so you may need to simply conclude with example answers. Example answers may be any principles that are normalized by the world yet are rejected by God, such as: lying, cheating on tests, premarital sex, matters involving LGBTQ+, gender discussions, foul language, cyber bullying, etc.)*

**2. Becoming a Holy Nation**

**a. What is holiness in the camp?**

Holiness is not just a personal matter. It also needs to happen throughout the camp! Today’s lesson taught us how important it was for the Israelites to maintain holiness not just on an individual basis, but also as a group. So how can we encourage one another and maintain holiness within our ‘camp’? Without holiness, no one can see God, so this should be our goal as Christians! (Heb 12:14)

- How have your class or your teachers been encouraging you in a practical manner during the weekdays? Have you been spiritually building each other up outside of church?

- When was the last time you spiritually encouraged a classmate when seeing them at church — such as praying during lunchtime — instead of just chatting about worldly things?
- Do you have a spiritual buddy? Do you hold each other accountable, and turn to each other when you have spiritual issues, or need someone to pray with?

**b. What is holiness among the people?**

While the camp refers to our spiritual family at church, “the people” refers to those outside of this camp, such as our friends, neighbors, or even the person who is lining up behind you at the store. These people may or may not know God, but 2 Timothy 3:2–4 says that in the last days, among other things, people will be proud, disobedient, unforgiving, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. But as “evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse”, “you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of” (v. 13–14).

- How do you live your life in such a way so that others can see holiness in you? How do we become “a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master”? (2 Tim 2:21)

*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)

**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*

---

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 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 live out the life applications. This means we must learn to separate ourselves from the rest of the world, maintain peace and harmony within our church, and strive to live a holy life.

## 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, and ultimately, to us?  
*These rules were set by God so that they and we can remain holy. Our goal is to be a holy nation. This means that we need to learn how to separate ourselves from the ideologies and unclean practices of this world.*
6. In what way is sin similar to leprosy? What happens to our spiritual lives when sin becomes a habit?  
*Like leprosy, sin is contagious and can eat away at our spiritual life. When sin becomes a habit, we become desensitized to God's words, and eventually our lack of sensitivity may lead to spiritual death.*
7. What are some practical ways we can aim for "holiness in the camp"?  
*We can encourage one another and maintain holiness in the church by maintaining prayer habits outside of church, praying with our classmates during lunchtime instead of just chatting about worldly things, or having a spiritual buddy.*