

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 5

This chapter contains a repetition of some former laws, concerning putting unclean persons out of the camp, (^{<OF1>}Numbers 5:1-4); making restitution in case of trespass against another, (^{<OF5>}Numbers 5:5-8); and of giving the offering of all holy things and all hallowed things to the priests, (^{<OF9>}Numbers 5:9,10); and a new law concerning jealousy, in a man, of his wife, (^{<OF11>}Numbers 5:11-14); when she was to be brought to the priest, and various rites and ceremonies to be used, (^{<OF15>}Numbers 5:15-23); who was to give her bitter water as a trial of her chastity, which, if guilty, would have a strange effect upon her, and make her accursed, but if not, would not affect her, and she would be free and happy, (^{<OF24>}Numbers 5:24-31).

Ver. 1. *And the Lord spake unto Moses*, etc.] Jarchi says, what follows was said on the day the tabernacle was erected, but it seems rather to have been delivered after the several camps were formed, and the people numbered, when those that were unclean were ordered to be cast out of them:

saying; as follows.

Ver. 2. *Command the children of Israel*, etc.] Not as from himself, but from the Lord; deliver out the following as a command of his, to which obedience was required of all the children of Israel:

that they put out of the camp every leper; there were three camps, Jarchi says, in the time of their encampment; between the curtains was the camp of the Shechinah, or the divine Majesty; the encampment of the Levites round about; and from thence to the end was the camp of the standards, to the four winds, which was the camp of Israel; and the leper was to be put out of them all; so Ben Gersom; (see ^{<OF34>}Leviticus 13:46);

and everyone that hath an issue; a gonorrhoea, man or woman, (see ^{<OF15>}Leviticus 15:2,19); according Jarchi, such an one might be in the camp of Israel, but was to be put out of the other two camps:

and whosoever is defiled by the dead; by attending the funerals of the dead, or touching them, (see ^{<R20>}Leviticus 21:1 22:4); such an one might go into the camp of the Levites, according to Jarchi and Ben Gersom; and was to be put of none but the camp of the Shechinah, or the tabernacle; but the camp of Israel seems to be meant of them all, out of which they were to be put, as an emblem of the rejection of all impure persons out of the church of God.

Ver. 3. *Both male and female shall ye put out*, etc.] Whether leprous, or profluvius, or defiled by touching a dead carcass: by this law, Miriam, when leprous, was put out of the camp, (^{<H214>}Numbers 12:14,15);

without the camp shall ye put them; which is repeated that it might be taken notice of, and punctually observed:

that they defile not their camps; of which there were four, the camps of Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan:

in the midst whereof I dwell; for the tabernacle, which was the dwelling place of the Lord, was in the midst of the camps of Israel; they were pitched on the four quarters of it; and this is a reason why impure persons were not suffered to be in the camp of Israel, because of the presence of God in the tabernacle so near them, to whom all, impurity is loathsome, and not to be permitted in his sight; and though this was ceremonial, it was typical of the uncleanness of sin, which is abominable to him, and renders persons unfit for communion with him, and with his people.

Ver. 4. *And the children of Israel did so, and put them without the camp*, etc.] Aben Ezra observes, that this was done immediately before they journeyed, and that those that were defiled journeyed between the standard of Ephraim and the standard of Dan; but this, he says, was by way of conjecture, since it is not expressed:

as the Lord spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel; they were obedient in this particular.

Ver. 5. *And the Lord spake unto Moses*, etc.] Or continued to speak to him at the same time:

saying; as follows.

Ver. 6. *Speak unto the children of Israel*, etc.] Put them in mind of the following law, that they observe it; and which is here repeated, because of

two new things in it, as Jarchi observes, the one relates to confession, teaching that there is no fifth part nor trespass offering by witnesses, till a man confesses the thing; and the other is, concerning taking anything away by violence from a proselyte, which is to be given to the priests; see the original law in (^{<RB>}Leviticus 6:1-7);

when a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit; or, “any of the sins of men”^{f26}, which are commonly done by men, and men are subject to through the infirmity of the flesh, and the temptations of Satan; or “any sin against man”^{f27}, so some, as this referred to is expressly said to be, (^{<RB>}Numbers 5:7);

to do a trespass against the Lord; for every sin against man is also against the Lord, being a breach of his command; as David’s sin against Uriah was a sin against the Lord, (^{<RB>}Psalms 51:4); though the Jews understand it particularly of lying and swearing falsely, appealing to God, and calling him to be a witness to a falsehood; and so the Targum of Onkelos seems to interpret it:

and the person be guilty; and knows he is so, and even knew it when he took an oath to the contrary; (see ^{<RB>}Leviticus 6:3,4).

Ver. 7. *Then they shall confess their sin which they have done*, etc.] The form of which confession, according to Fagius, was, O Lord, I am guilty of death, I have deserved to be stoned for this sin, or to be strangled for this trespass, or to be burnt for this crime, etc.

and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth [part] thereof; paying the whole of whatsoever he had in any manner defrauded his neighbour of, to which he was to add a fifth part of that; that is, as Aben Ezra interprets it, it he confesses of himself, but if there are witnesses of it he must add two fifths, and some say a fifth of a fifth:

and give [it] unto [him] against whom he hath trespassed; as a satisfaction for the injury done him.

Ver. 8. *But if a man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass to*, etc.] This supposes that if a man should die, against whom the trespass is, before the restitution is made, then it shall be made to his heirs; and if he has none, then it was to be given to the priest, as after directed: the Jews^{f28} generally understand this of a proselyte, that has no heirs, for they say, there is no

Israelite but has kinsmen, a brother or a son, or some one or other near of kin to him, of his father's family, even up to Jacob:

let the trespass be recompensed unto the Lord, [even] to the priest; that is, let the principal, with the fifth part, which is the recompence for the trespass committed, be given to the priest of the Lord, which is the same as if it was given to him, he being his minister:

beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him; which, in this case, was ordered to be offered for the expiation, of the trespass, (see ^{<RB6>}Leviticus 6:6,7); the Jewish canon is,

“he that takes away anything by force from a proselyte, and swears to him, and he (the proselyte) dies, lo, he shall pay the principal and the fifth to the priests, and the trespass offering to the altar, as it is said, “if a man has no kinsman”, etc. when he brings the money and the trespass offering, and he is dead, the money shall be given to his sons, but the trespass offering (the ram) shall feed until it contracts some blemish, and then it shall be sold, and the price of it shall fall to the freewill offerings ^{f29}.”

Ver. 9. *And every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel,* etc.] Of the holy sacrifices brought by them to be offered up; that part of them which is elevated, heaved, or waved, as the heave shoulder and wave breast:

which they bring unto the priest, shall be his; what they bring to him to offer for them shall be his who performs the service, even that part of them which is his due.

Ver. 10. *And every man's hallowed things shall be his,* etc.] Which he, by a vow or freewill offering, separates to holy uses; these are at his own dispose, to give to what priest he will, or they are the priest's; for what a man devotes to the Lord is to be given to them, or such things as God has hallowed, sanctified, and set apart for sacred uses, as the firstfruits and tithes, they were the priests'; the Jewish writers ^{f30} restrain it to tithes:

whatsoever any man giveth the priest, it shall be his; his personally, who officiates, or to whom the gift is given, and is not to be divided among the other priests in the course.

Ver. 11. *And the Lord spake unto Moses,* etc.] At the same time, and delivered to him a new law:

saying; as follows.

Ver. 12. *Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them,* etc.] It being an affair which concerned them:

if any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him; the sin of adultery, which is a going aside out of the way of virtue and chastity, and a trespass against an husband, a breach of the marriage covenant with him, a defiling his bed, doing an injury and dishonour to him, bringing confusion into his family, and a spurious offspring to possess his substance: though this is to be understood, not of certain adultery, of which there is plain and full proof, for then there would be no occasion of such a trial, as is afterwards directed to; besides, her husband, in such a case, might put her away, and even, according to the law, she was to be put to death, (~~REMO~~ Leviticus 20:10); but of her having committed it in the opinion of her husband, he having some ground of suspicion, though he could not be certain of it; and therefore, by this law, was allowed to make trial, that he might find it out, it at present only a suspected case, and a doubtful one; and the Jews ^{f31} say,

“they never gave the waters drink but in a doubtful case:”

and so this may interpreted of her declining and departing from her husband's house, not keeping at home to mind the affairs of her family, but gadding abroad, and keeping company with another man, or other men; and that after she had been warned and charged by her husband to the contrary, and so had disobeyed him, and acted contrary to his will; and in that sense had committed a trespass, and so had given him suspicion of her unchastity, for which he might have some reason; if, as it is said in the Misnah ^{f32}, he gave her an admonition before two witnesses, saying, have no talk with such a man, and yet she talks with him; or, as the commentators add ^{f33}, be not secretly or in private with such an one, and yet goes into a private place with him, and stays so long with him that she may be defiled; this with them rendered her suspected.

Ver. 13. *And a man lie with her carnally,* etc.] That is, is suspected that he has so done, not that it is a clear case, for it follows;

and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close; so that it is not known by her husband, nor by any other; “she hath hid herself”, so Ainsworth, being in a private place with another man, though warned to the contrary by her husband:

and she be defiled, and [there be] no witness against her; of her being defiled, though there may be of her being in private with such a man:

neither she be taken [with the manner]; or in the act of uncleanness.

Ver. 14. *And the spirit of jealousy come upon him*, etc.] A thought rises up in his mind, a strong suspicion works in him, which he cannot resist and throw off, but it remains with him, and makes him very uneasy, that his wife has defiled his bed, as it follows:

and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled; that his wife is defiled by a man; and which is the real case, as it afterwards appears, though at present he is not certain, only has a suspicion of it:

or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled; it is mere jealousy and suspicion, without any foundation for it; and his wife proved a chaste and virtuous woman; yet be it which it would, he being jealous, the following law was to take place, and the following rules to be observed.

Ver. 15. *Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest*, etc.] Not to the high priest but to a common priest, anyone then officiating in his course; for there was a jealousy offering to be offered up before the Lord upon the altar, which none but a priest might do; and besides, the whole process in this affair was to be carried, on by him: according to the Misnah^{f34}, the man brought his wife first to the sanhedrim, or court of judicature in the place where he lived; before whom, as Maimonides^{f35} says, he proved by witnesses that he had warned his wife of being in private with such a man, and yet she had done it again; and whereas she insisted on her chastity, he desired that the bitter waters might be given her, that the truth might appear; and then they sent him with two disciples of the wise men, to the great sanhedrim at Jerusalem, where the trial was made; who, in order to bring her too confession, endeavoured to terrify her, as they do persons in capital cases, and finding this wilt not do, then they used smooth words, saying, my daughter, perhaps much wine was the occasion of it, or much laughter, etc.

and he shall bring her offering for her: not the priest, but her husband, and that whether he is willing or not, as Aben Ezra; who also observes, that it may be interpreted, with her, or for her sake, not to make any expiation for any fault of his, that when he first observed her immodesty, did not reprove her; for the offering, though brought by him, was not his, but his wife's, and not to expiate her sin, but to bring it to remembrance, as is after expressed:

the tenth [part] of an ephah of barley meal; which was an omer, (^{<Q166>}Exodus 16:36), the quantity of manna for one man every day, (^{<Q166>}Exodus 16:16), and the quantity of flour in the daily meat offering, (^{<Q240>}Exodus 29:40); only that was of fine wheaten flour; this of barley, the food of beasts, as the Targum of Jonathan remarks; and R. Gamaliel in the Misnah ^{f36} says, that as her deed was the deed of a beast, so her offering was the food of a beast; and this is observed by Jarchi and Aben Ezra on the text, as the reason of barley being used in this offering: some say it was a symbol of her impudence, others of her being little at home, as the barley is not long under ground ^{f37}; the true reason, it may be, was for her humiliation, being vile, and mean, hence it follows:

he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; as used to be oft meat offerings, denoting their acceptableness to God, (^{<R11>}Leviticus 2:1); the reason seems to be, because these were tokens of joy and gladness, whereas this was a mournful affair to the husband, that he should have any cause of suspicion and jealousy, to the wife that she should be suspected, and to the whole family on that account:

for it [is] an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance; if guilty of it, and therefore oil and frankincense were forbidden in this kind of offering as in a sin offering, (^{<R51>}Leviticus 5:11).

Ver. 16. *And the priest shall bring her near*, etc.] Or “offer it”, as the Vulgate Latin version, that is, the offering of jealousy:

and set her before the Lord; or “it”, the offering; for which the Tigurine version is more express,

“let the priest offer that sacrifice, and set that before the Lord,”

for the setting of the woman before the Lord is spoken of in (^{<Q518>}Numbers 5:18).

Ver. 17. *And the priest shall take holy water*, etc.] Out of the laver, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, and so Jarchi and Aben Ezra:

in an earthen vessel; which held half a log, and that was but a quarter of a pint, or three egg shells; for no more was assigned, to a suspected woman, according to the Misnah^{f38}. Some say only a fourth part: an earthen vessel was made use of, as everything vile and mean was in this affair:

and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put [it] into the water; first the water was put in, and then the dust, as Ben Gersom observes: there was a place a cubit square, where was a marble table, and a ring fixed in it, and when he lifted it up he took dust from under it, and put it so as it might be upon the top of the water^{f39}; which was used, either, as the Targum of Jonathan suggests, because the end of all flesh is to come to dust, and so to put her in mind of her original and her end; and in like manner the earthen vessel might signify, that she would be broke to pieces as that vessel; as also it might direct her thoughts to the tempter, by the influence of whose temptation she had been drawn into this sin, dust being the serpent's food; and this being taken off the floor of the tabernacle, might add to the veneration of it, and make it more solemn and awful to drink of it.

Ver. 18. *And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord*, etc.] In the east of the tabernacle, with her face to the west, where was the holy of holies, so Ben Gersom; but not immediately for they had her from place to place, as Jarchi says, till she was weary, and her mind disturbed, that she might confess; and if she said, I am defiled, she rent the writing of her dowry, and went out; but if she said, I am pure, they brought her to the eastern gate, the gate of Nicanor, for there they made women suspected of adultery to drink the waters^{f40}:

and uncover the woman's head; as a token of her immodesty and non-subjection to her husband, and that she might be seen by all, to cause shame in her: according to the Misnah^{f41}, the priest took off her clothes, and loosed her hair--if she was clothed with white garments, he clothed her with black; if she had on her ornaments of gold, chains, earrings, or rings, he took them away from her, that she might be unseemly, and whoever would might come and look at her:

and put the offering of memorial into her hands, which [is] the jealousy offering; to weary her, as Jarchi says, that if perhaps her mind was

disturbed she would confess; and so in the Misnah^{f42} it is said, that her husband put this offering into her hands to weary her; but the true reason here seems to be, that it might appear to be her own offering:

and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse; not that the water was bitter of itself, for it was the water out of the laver, and had nothing in it but the dust of the floor of the tabernacle; though some think some bitter thing was put into it, so Ben Gersom, as wormwood; but it is so called from the effects of it on those that were guilty; it produced sad effects in them, bitter and distressing, and made them appear to be accursed ones, for it was not bitter till it entered, (~~OR~~ Numbers 5:24); whereas it was not so to the innocent, nor attended with any such consequence to them; so that there was nothing in the water itself, but its efficacy was divine and supernatural.

Ver. 19. *And the priest shall charge her by an oath*, etc.] Or give her her oath:

and say unto the woman, if no man hath lain with thee: besides her husband:

and thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness [with another] instead of thy husband; which is but another phrase expressive of the same thing, the sin of adultery:

be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse; if this is the case, it shall produce no bitter effects, or bring any curse upon thee.

Ver. 20. *But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband*, etc.] Gone aside from the paths of modesty and chastity, and betook herself to another man's bed instead of her husband's:

and if thou be defiled, by committing adultery:

and some man hath lain with thee beside thy husband; these phrases are all synonymous, and a heap of words are made use of to express the sin, and that there might be no evasion of it, and that it might be clear what was intended, this being said on oath.

Ver. 21. *Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing*, etc.] An oath which has a curse annexed to it, if taken falsely, which was to be pronounced upon the woman if guilty:

and the priest shall say unto the woman; pronouncing the imprecation or curse upon her, she having taken the oath, should she be guilty of the crime suspected of, and she had sworn concerning:

the Lord make thee a curse, and an oath among the people; accursed according to the oath taken; or let this be the form of an oath and imprecation used by the people, saying, if I have done so and so, let me be accursed as such a woman, or let not that happen to me, as did to such a woman, so Jarchi:

when the Lord doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell; upon drinking the bitter waters; but though these things followed upon that, yet not as the natural cause of them, for they are ascribed to the Lord, and to a supernatural and miraculous power of his, which went along with the drinking of them.

Ver. 22. *And this water that causeth the curse*, etc.] Upon the drinking of which the curse follows, if guilty:

shall go into thy bowels; and there operate and produce the above effects, which are repeated again to inject terror:

to make [thy] belly to swell, and [thy] thigh to rot; here ends the form of the oath, which begins (⁽⁴¹⁵⁹⁾Numbers 5:19);

and the woman shall say, amen, amen; so be it; let it be as pronounced, if I am guilty; which, as Aben Ezra observes, is repeated for the sake of confirmation; though the Jewish writers commonly understand it as respecting various things, the oath and the curse, the thing charged with, and the persons suspected of ^{f43}.

Ver. 23. *And the priest shall write these curses in a book*, etc.] The above curses imprecated on herself by an oath; the words and the letters of them were written at length, in a scroll of parchment; and, as some say also, her name, but not her double amen to them ^{f44}:

and he shall blot [them] out with the bitter water: wash them out with it, and into it, or scrape them off of the parchment into it.

Ver. 24. *And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse*, etc.]. Having the curse imprecated upon herself, if guilty, scraped into it; and this she was obliged to drink, whether she would or not; so it is said, if the roll is blotted out, and she says I am

defiled, the water is poured out, and her offering is scattered in the place of ashes; if the roll is blotted out, and she says I will not drink, then force her, and make her drink whether she will or no ^{f45}:

and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, [and become] bitter; produce the sad and bitter effects mentioned.

Ver. 25. *Then the priest shall take the jealousy offering out of the woman's hand*, etc.] Which she was obliged to hold in her hand while the above rites and ceremonies were performed; which was very heavy, being an omer of barley flour, a measure about three quarts, which was put into an Egyptian basket made of small palm tree twigs: and this was put into her hands to weary her, as before observed, that, having her mind distressed, she might the sooner confess her crime:

and shall wave the offering before the Lord: backwards and forwards, upwards and downwards, as Jarchi; who also observes, that the woman waved with him, for her hand was above the hand of the priest so the tradition is,

“he (her husband) took her offering out of the Egyptian basket, and put it into a ministering vessel, and gave it into her hand, and the priest put his hand under hers, and waved it ^{f46}.”

and offer it upon the altar: this was the bringing of it to the southwest corner of the altar, as Jarchi says, before he took a handful out of it, as in other meat offerings.

Ver. 26. *And the priest shall take an handful of the offering, [even] the memorial thereof*, etc.] For good or evil, according as her works were, as Aben Ezra observes; a memorial for good, if innocent, and a memorial for evil, if guilty:

and burn [it] upon the altar; as the handful of other meat offerings used to be, (~~CRUDE~~ Leviticus 1:2);

and afterwards shall cause the woman to drink the water; oblige her to it; having proceeded thus far, and no confession made, namely, an oath taken, the curses of it written in a scroll and scraped into the waters, and the jealousy offering waved and offered.

Ver. 27. *And when he hath made her to drink the water*, etc.] For, as before observed, and here by Jarchi again, if she says I will not drink it,

after the roll is blotted out, they oblige her, and make her drink it whether she will or not, unless she says I am defiled:

then it shall come to pass, [that] if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband; or has committed adultery:

that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, [and become] bitter; the water drank by her, and having the curses scraped into it, shall enter into her, and operate and produce bitter and dreadful effects:

and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot; not through any natural virtue in the water, or what is put into it, either the dust of the floor of the tabernacle, or the scrapings of the parchment roll, these could have no physical influence to produce such effects; but they must be ascribed to a supernatural cause, the power and curse of God attending this draught. A certain Jewish writer^{f47} says, though very falsely, that the priest put poison into the water, which produced such effects; but then, how could an innocent woman escape the effects of it? that must be allowed to be miraculous and supernatural, was it so; but there is no manner of reason to believe that anything of this kind was put into it, The Jews say^{f48}, as soon, or before she had made an end of drinking: the water, the effects appeared; her face turned pale immediately, her eyes bolted out, and she was filled with veins, her body swelled, and they called out, Cast her out, cast her out, that she may not defile the court. And the text seems to intimate, as if the operation was immediate; yea, moreover, they say^{f49}, that as the waters searched her, so they searched him (the adulterer), because it is said twice, “shall enter, shall enter”; and that the same effects appeared in him as in her, but in neither, unless the husband was innocent; for if he was not pure from the same sin himself, the waters would not search his wife^{f50} hence they say^{f51}, when adulterers increased (under the second temple) the bitter waters ceased, according to (~~3044~~Hosea 4:14); (see ~~4029~~Matthew 12:39). This practice has been imitated by the Heathens; the river Rhine, according to Julian the emperor^{f52}, tried the legitimacy of children; and so lakes have been used for the trial of perjury and unchastity, as the Stygian lake for perjury, and another of the same name near Ephesus for unchastity; into which, if persons suspected of adultery descended, having the form of an oath hanging about their necks, if they were pure, the waters stood unmoved, but if corrupt, they swelled up to their necks, and covered the tablet on which the oath was written^{f53}. The priestesses of a certain deity being obliged to live a single life, were tried by drinking bullocks’ blood,

upon which, if false to their oath and corrupt, they immediately died, as Pausanias^{f54} relates; and Macrobius^{f55} speaks of some lakes in Sicily, the inhabitants called the Cups, to which recourse was had when persons were suspected of any ill, and where an oath was taken of them; if the person swore truly, he departed unhurt, but if falsely, he immediately lost his life in the lake. Philostratus^{f56} relates of a water near Tyana, a city in Cappadocia, sacred to Jupiter, which the inhabitants call Asbamaea, which to those that kept their oaths was placid and sweet, but to perjured persons the reverse; it affected their eyes, hands, and feet, and seized them with dropsies and consumptions; nor could they depart from the water, but remained by it, mourning their sad case, and confessing their perjury: but what comes nearest to this usage of the Jews is a custom at marriages among the savages at Cape Breton^{f57}: at a marriage feast, two dishes of meat are brought to the bridegroom and bride in two “ouragans” (basins made of the bark of a tree), and the president of the feast addresses himself to the bride thus,

“and thou that art upon the point of entering into a respectable state, know, that the nourishment thou art going to take forebodes the greatest calamities to thee, if thy heart is capable of harbouring any ill design against thy husband, or against thy nation: shouldst thou ever be led astray by the caresses of a stranger; or shouldst thou betray thy husband, and thy country, the victuals contained in this “ouragan” will have the effects of a slow poison, with which thou wilt be tainted from this very instant; but if, on the other hand, thou remainest faithful to thy husband, and to thy country, if thou wilt never insult the one for his defect, nor give a description of the other to the enemy, thou wilt find this nourishment both agreeable and wholesome.”

Now if these relations can be credited, then much more this of the bitter waters, for though there was something wonderful and supernatural in them, yet nothing incredible:

and the woman shall be a curse among her people: the time she lives; but then all this while she was looked upon as an accursed person, and despised and shunned by all.

Ver. 28. *And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean*, etc.] If she is not guilty of adultery, but pure from that sin:

then she shall be free; from the effects of the bitter water; they shall have no such influence upon her, but she shall be as soured and healthful as ever; nay, the Jewish writers say more so, that if she had any sickness or disease upon her she would now be freed from it ^{f58}; the Targum of Jonathan has it, her splendour shall shine, the brightness and beauty of her countenance:

and shall conceive seed; a man child, as the same Targum; and the Jewish writers say, if she was barren before, now she would be fruitful; but no more is meant by it than that her husband should receive her gladly, and she should live comfortably with him hereafter, and the blessing of God would be upon her, which would still be a confirmation of her chastity.

Ver. 29. *This [is] the law of jealousies*, etc.] Which was appointed by God to deter wives from adultery, and preserve the people of Israel, the worshippers of him, from having a spurious brood among them; and to keep husbands from being cruel to their wives they might be jealous of, and to protect virtue and innocence, and to detect lewdness committed in the most secret manner; whereby God gave proof of his omniscience, that he had knowledge of the most private acts of uncleanness, and was the avenger of all such. The reasons why such a law was not made equally in favour of women, as of men, are supposed to be these: because of the greater authority of the man over the woman, which would seem to be lessened, if such a power was granted her; because marriage was not so much hurt, or so much damage came to families by the adultery of men, as of women; because women are more apt to be suspicious than men, and in those times more prone to adultery, through their eager desire of children, that they might not lie under reproach ^{f59}:

when a wife goeth aside [to another] instead of her husband, and is defiled; is suspected of going aside to another man, and is supposed to be defiled by him.

Ver. 30. *Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife*, etc.] (See Gill on “⁴⁰¹⁵⁴Numbers 5:14”);

and shall set the woman before the Lord; has carried the matter so far as to bring his wife to the priest or civil magistrate, and declare his suspicion, and the ground of it:

and the priest shall execute upon her all this law; he shall proceed according to the law, and perform every rite and ceremony required; nor could any stop be put to it, unless the woman owned she was defiled.

Ver. 31. *Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity*, etc.] Which otherwise he would not, by conniving at her loose way of living, and not reproving her for it, and bringing her either to repentance or punishment; and retaining and encouraging jealousy in his mind, without declaring it, and his reasons for it: the sense of the passage seems to be, that when a man had any ground for his suspicion and jealousy, and he proceeded according as this law directs, whether his wife was guilty or not guilty, no sin was chargeable on him, or blame to be laid to him, or punishment inflicted on him:

and the woman shall bear her iniquity; the punishment of it, through the effects of the bitter waters upon her, if guilty; nor was her husband chargeable with her death, she justly brought it on herself: or if not guilty, yet as she had by some unbecoming behaviour raised such a suspicion in him, nor would she be reclaimed, though warned to the contrary, she for it justly bore the infamy of such a process; which was such, as Maimonides says^{f60}, that innocent women would give all that they had to escape it, and reckoned death itself more agreeable than that, as to be served as such a woman was; (see Gill on “~~4158~~ Numbers 5:18”).