

ORDEAL OF JEALOUSY

FIDDLER ON ROOF: TEVYE – IT'S NOT EASY BEING THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

At this time in world history, the human race is divided into two groups – Israelites and non-Israelites. The same is true today – those who trust Christ for salvation and those who don't.

The promises of God were made to Israel, NOT to everyone. We Christians inherit the promises of God through Christ by being grafted into Israel (spiritually). Because Jesus fulfilled the Torah's requirements, we have that access.

Now – I believe that it is beneficial to us to understand what He did and said *in the eye of the Jewish society*. For example:

SLIDE: JOHN 21:1-14

We have a post resurrection incident, caught **153 fish** – significance?

- I have read much speculation by Christian commentators, very fanciful (number 7 times x number of apostles plus the average number of bagels Jesus would have eaten in a day, etc).

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The interpretation is actually very simple to someone familiar with the Torah. Ask any orthodox Jew with any historical training what 153 meant at the time of Jesus and he would tell you – “it’s simple”.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses – at the end of his life – gave this order:

“[Every seven years] you shall read this Torah aloud in the presence of all Israel.” (Deut 31:9–11).

Remember – the Torah is the first five books of the Bible – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. So, every seven years at a minimum, the Jews had to read through the Torah aloud. Now, the Torah was written on scrolls, not in a book, and there were no printing presses then – so a copy of the scrolls was very rare. So, the reading wasn’t done in private – but rather publically at an assembly.

The practice varied widely as to how this was done – you could read it all in one sitting, read it in several sittings over a period of days, etc. By the time of Jesus, the standard practice was to break the Torah into small sections and read a section aloud in the synagogue over a three year period (similar to Catholics’ liturgical cycle).^{1,2}

¹ Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly, *The Triennial Torah Reading Cycle*

² Ibid; Jewish Encyclopedia, *Triennial Cycle*

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- So, guess how many sections the Torah was broken into?
153. The Jews read the Torah aloud over a three year period in 153 parts.^{3,4}

SLIDE: ** Torah divided into 153 parts over a 3 year cycle ->
Jesus had 3 year ministry

- The apostles would have understood the significance of 153 – and HE, THE WORD, IS THE 154TH PORTION! Jesus fulfilled the entire Torah – and now they would be fishers of men with that assurance
- Jesus fulfilled the Torah – even when He went fishing!

SLIDE: Today in the Book of Numbers I want to get into the Ordeal of Jealousy, and it is one of those sessions that – like Don Rumble occasionally says – make me want to stand near the door and be ready to run. It's going to deal with **two** controversial but related topics:

- 1) The Ordeal of Jealousy ceremony described in the Book of Numbers Chapter 5 – and
- 2) An incident with Jesus described in the Gospel of John.

³ Jewish Encyclopedia, *Parashah*

⁴ JewishAnswers.org, *Reading the Torah in Three Years*

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The OT Ordeal of Jealousy ceremony is sometimes cited to show how the Torah is full of superstition and can't be taken for what it plainly says. The NT incident is cited by those who want to teach that Jesus didn't follow the rules of the Torah and was pretty lenient when it came to forgiving sin.

I hope that, with the grace of God, I can show how the two situations are related and how **Jesus did follow** the Torah in each of these incidents down to the last jot and the tittle.

Note: I am giving all credit here to Tom Bradford explanation of the Ordeal of Jealousy as contained in his *Torah Class* exposition of Numbers Chapter 5. *Torah Class* is part of Seed of Abraham Ministries, Inc. in Merritt Island, Florida⁵

READ NUMBERS 5:11 – 31

⁵ <http://www.torahclass.com/>

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SLIDE THE ORDEAL OF JEALOUSY:

When coming to this particular portion of the Book of Numbers, people usually take one of two approaches:

1. They're embarrassed that the passage is here, so they either **skip** it because it seems so quaint and superstitious. Or...
2. They read it, chuckle about it, and point to it as an example on why we shouldn't pay too much attention to the Torah but rather concentrate on the NT.

Both reactions are understandable → No portion of the Torah has caused more bewilderment and hand-wringing than this one passage.

- It really seems out of place in the Bible, **and yet – here it is.** And so we must look at it.

While the tendency to avoid this ritual as God's specific instruction is understandable, we are not allowed the luxury of speaking only on those sections that makes us feel comfortable. If I am to maintain that Jesus was a Torah-observant Jew, as He Himself said He was – I must address it.

- If we are to maintain that the entire Torah speaks about Jesus – as He claimed – we must address it.

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Jesus is the Word of God and thus was responsible for the Torah – so we have to deal with this passage – and **every other one** – in the **same way Jesus Himself did** – straightforwardly.

SLIDE: TRIAL BY GOD

The passage recounts the procedure given by God whereby a jealous husband who *suspects* his wife of having committed adultery may bring her before a priest to submit to a trial by ordeal – either to clear her of guilt or convict her by God’s judgment.

Now just a reminder – this incident applies in the case where a wife is suspected of adultery but it is not proven, and she denies it. If she was *provably guilty* (either two witnesses saw the act or she admits it), then she was subject to the Law in Leviticus: *death by stoning*.

- But here, she is only suspected of adultery and she denies it.

In this passage, the **precise words** are prescribed that are to be spoken in the ritual to make the determination if the wife is guilty. While this sort of thing is quite normal in most of the Middle Eastern cultures, it is almost non-existent in the Holy Scriptures. Usually, just a broad outline for the ritual

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procedure is provided and the exact words of the oaths and prayers that might be used are left undefined. The lack of detail in the Torah of some of the ritual procedures is what the earliest Hebrew Traditions (Talmud, Midrash) sought to remedy.

Now, the situation in which this occurs is not as straightforward as we might imagine. The husband just didn't wake up one morning and become jealous about his wife. This was actually the second stage of a two-stage process.

- The first stage had already occurred – when a husband suspects his wife of an improper relationship with another man, and he warns her, before two witnesses, not to be alone with that individual.
- The 2nd stage happens if the woman disregards this warning and proceeds to seclude herself with the other man. She then becomes what is known as 'sotah' – a wife who is forbidden to live with her husband unless she agrees to be tested with the "bitter waters."

Q: WHY IS THIS PASSAGE HERE AT ALL?

Well... the regulations of the Torah as mostly idealistic principles – and they are – but occasionally they also evidently

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served for a practical purpose for everyday life, as is the case for this particular ordeal. Suddenly thrusting 2 or 3 million people together in such extreme circumstances as they would have faced in the Wilderness, and under what must have been a pretty densely packed tent city with little privacy, in a culture where modesty was required but now was difficult to maintain, would have made the likelihood of men and women coming into human contact in ways that they shouldn't all the more tempting and probable. The # of incidents must have been significant, because it would not have been written down if it was a rare occurrence. So methods of dealing with it and discouraging it had to be established, else people would start taking the law into their own hands – either against the other man or against the wife (HONOR KILLINGS today).

The Israelites, even after seeing the Cloud of God's presence, were obviously not perfect people. God Himself made it clear that He didn't choose Israel because they were more a faithful people (they weren't), or because they shunned other gods (they didn't), or because they behaved in more civilized ways, or were inherently kinder than most..... (none of which would aptly describe Israel)...

He chose Israel for His own good reasons (which He has not shared with mankind), not because of any merit on their part. And, if we're honest about it, God typically chooses

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people who are the least likely to succeed, not those with the greatest fortitude or inner strength. It's the same thing for us – we were just as pagan and weak and prone to evil as anybody else, but God allowed us into the Kingdom because we agreed with Him on the ONE crucial issue: Jesus Christ.

*** God had only ONE perfect tool to work with on planet earth– Jesus; all the rest of us are defective and probably ought to be returned for refund

So, the ordeal was needed to **maintain order in the community and restore marriages.**

There are three main reasons why this passage strikes us as a problem:

JEALOUSY = EVIL?

First: it is performed because of a husband's "Jealousy". **Jealousy is an ugly word.** "It is the green-eyed monster," said Shakespeare – hence the background color of the slide. The ceremony seems to be condoning the husband's having the feeling. The word has overtones of selfishness, suspicion, and distrust; it is seen as possessive, demanding, and overbearing. It stifles freedom and individuality, it degrades and demeans, it breeds tension and discord, it destroys friendships and marriages. We view jealousy as a horrible trait and we hate it.

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But, after God takes the Israelites out of Egypt, He says:
“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for **I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God**”
(Exodus 20:4–5).

A jealous God! How can a God who is holy, just, loving, gracious, merciful, and long-suffering possibly be jealous? St. Paul picks up on the word and after a discussion of idolatry in the church of Corinth, he asks, “Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?” (1 Corinthians 10:22) If jealousy is always evil, then Paul is saying that we can provoke God into doing something evil! **That’s crazy-town! There must be occasions where jealousy IS the proper response.**

Jealousy, like anger, is not evil in itself, because if it is *a/ways* evil, then it couldn’t be ascribed to God. God’s jealousy is a zeal to protect a love relationship or to avenge it when it is broken. Jealousy in God is that passionate energy by which He is provoked and stirred and moved to take action. Jealousy is possessive and protective; it can be good or bad. God’s jealousy – His possessiveness of His people – is a good thing; it protects us from being plucked out of His hand. The intensity

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of God's anger at threats to this relationship is **directly proportionate to the depths of His love.** ⁶

But jealousy is unreasonable in us when it becomes paranoid – when it tries to control others, when it stifles the person. It can be wrong.

Now, this ceremony did not require that the husband have a proper attitude – whether the jealousy is coming from a righteous motivation or whether it is coming from a suspicious paranoid. The passage makes no distinction as to whether he is acting out of righteous jealousy or whether he is just paranoid. However, he's not going to have to courage to come before the priests too often with the charge – or they'll act against him (ex.; if the husband falsely accused his new wife of premarital sex, he would be whipped and fined a hundred shekels – over a year's wages – and no longer allowed have a divorce for any reason (Deut. 13–19).

ANTI-WOMAN?

A second reason why the passage bothers people is that, when they read it, it **sounds like the law puts women down.** It is true that God didn't change the male-dominated culture of the

⁶ The issue of God's jealousy, and jealousy in general, is discussed in Session 30 and 31

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Hebrews overnight, but this is not one of those totally one-sided regulations. As in everything else, the truth is in the details.

While it is the accused woman who must actually drink the bitter waters, Jewish oral tradition (written down in the Talmud) reveals that the waters affected her male partner in adultery identically. Just as the waters examine her, they also examine him.

What is more, the Torah awards the power of decision to the woman rather than to the man who must share her fate. **She is not forced to drink the bitter waters at all.** She just has to refuse to drink the bitter waters on any grounds at all – and her refusal was not an admission of guilt! She can say she has too much anxiety; she can say she would rather lose money than cause the holy name of God to be rubbed out; she can say she can't live with such a suspicious husband anyway etc. All she loses if she chooses not to drink is her ketubah, her marriage settlement, merely a monetary loss. She is free to marry anyone, and walk away from the entire mess totally unencumbered.

The man, on the other hand, is at her mercy. If she professes her innocence and insists on drinking the waters, , even

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though she is actually guilty, the water will sterilize her & it will sterilize him also!

PRIMITIVE SUPERSTITION?

The third reason why it strikes us oddly is that it **smacks of primitive superstition** – dust, holy water, and ink from an oath washed into a cup and then drinking it. Sounds odd to us, but it was a reality.

There was nothing magical about the water. And, no human is doing anything physically to this woman to cause her to abort her child or to become sterile. This mixture of water, dust and ink is not poisonous... and it does not cause harm (although it probably doesn't taste very good). Rather, the end result is a supernatural judgment of God, the elements of which are wrapped up in the ritual and the water concoction she'll drink.

Of all the 613 commandments in the Torah, it is only this law that requires God's specific co-operation to make it work. The bitter waters can only be effective miraculously.

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SLIDE: THE WIFE CLAIMS INNOCENCE

With Israel, **PROVEN** Adultery WAS a crime. And it was as much a part of the law code as murder or theft. The **ONLY** viable penalty for *proven* adultery under the law to be **death**. There was **no option** of mercy or a lesser sentence. There is no trial per se; there are not two sides to the story. Determining the truth is not at issue. And, it had a mandatory punishment – stoning to death.

But in the situation described here, we are told **four** different times that the husband was **suspicious** or **jealous**, and had no proof. The wife **claims** innocence. So is to be done?

The ordeal of jealousy put a stop to any thought of honor killing by either **the husband or any relatives** – as exists in Islam – by calling for a **trial by GOD**. Since **God** was the only witness, then God had to decide. He will make His decision known by means of a carefully defined water ordeal, and then whatever happened to the woman over time as a result of the ritual indicated God's decision.

SLIDE: THE RITUAL

So let's rapidly review this water-ordeal for the woman suspected of adultery. The rites consisted of two parts, in the **first** of which the woman in her wave-offering solemnly commended her ways to the Holy God of Israel, thus

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professing innocence: while in the second, she states her readiness to abide the consequences of her profession of innocence and she appeals to God to be a witness of her innocence.

...the ritual goes like this:

1. Her jealous husband brings the suspected wife to a Priest, along with an offering of barley.

The offering which she brought in her hand symbolized her works, the fruit of her life. But owing to the fact that her life was open to suspicion, it was brought, not of wheat, as on other occasions, but of barley-flour, which constituted the poorest fare, while, for the same reason, the customary addition of oil and frankincense was omitted.

2. The woman is taken by the Priest and placed in front of the Tabernacle, which is what is meant by bringing her "before the Lord"
3. The Priest puts "**Holy Water**" into a special container, and **dust from the Tabernacle floor** is mixed in with it. What, exactly, is holy water? It is just a synonym for "living water". Holy water only indicates that it is water that had been drawn from a running spring or river, – it had had movement, signifying life.

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Note: “holy water” here was the water that filled the Laver at the Tabernacle; it was used by the priests to wash their feet and hands during Tabernacle rituals.

4. The Priest hands the woman the barley and unbinds her hair.
5. The Priest then stands before the woman while holding the Holy Water vessel and recites an oath, and the woman agrees to the provisions of the oath by saying "Amen, amen".

The priest had to warn the woman of the terrible consequences of a false profession before the Lord, and to exhibit what he spoke in a symbolical act.

SLIDE: NEXT PART OF THE RITUAL

6. The Priest next writes down the oath he just pronounced, and then washes the freshly inked letters w/**YHWH (God's Name)** off the surface into the same vessel that holds the Holy Water and dust. We don't read that directly in the Torah that the letters of God's name was written, but it doesn't matter because it's a given. A Biblical oath by definition ALWAYS includes God's name; without God's

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name there was no oath. Just as when we write a letter to someone today, we write our name on that letter.

When we say to someone, I wrote so and so a letter, we don't have to say "and I signed my name", because without our name on it it's not a completed letter.

Same thing with an oath; a biblical oath is NOT merely the making of a statement; a biblical oath is the invoking of God's name as a validation and witness of your statement. It is calling upon God to be the guarantor of your promise.

Therefore when the ink of that written oath was immediately washed off into the holy water, God's Name flowed in as an ingredient.

7. The barley the woman has been holding is taken back from the woman by the Priest and presented to Yehoveh as a burnt offering on the Altar.
8. Now the woman drinks the mixture of Holy Water, dust, and ink.
9. Certain things happen to the woman if she is guilty. Nothing happens if she is innocent.

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The woman, having by a repeated *Amen*, was testifying that she understands the meaning of the oath, and that she is making her solemn appeal to God.

Q: BUT – WHY ALL THE ELABORATE RITUAL? Wouldn't the woman's oath be enough w/o the drinking of the mixture of water, dust and ink? Because a ritual signifies a very important event in the minds of people (baptism, marriage, inauguration, etc.).

Ritual – my college graduation ceremony (just mail it to me) –

Here in Numbers, this was important – the husband was not going to divorce her – he going to put away his jealousy and leave the matter in the hands of God. The wife would leave the proof of her innocence in the hands of God – God would give her healthy children. The marriage was restored.

Now, let's look at the famous story in the NT about the woman accused of adultery and brought by some Pharisees to Jesus to see what He does about it.

Let's turn our Bibles to John Chapter 8.

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SLIDE: JOHN 8:1–11

WWJD?

Notice that something very different has occurred here concerning the charge of adultery. The Pharisees said correctly the Torah demanded death for this woman because she was subject to the Leviticus law if she either was caught in the act of adultery or confessed to it. That is WHY the statement that she was "caught in the act" is so key; otherwise the law in Numbers 5 would have applied... a law that does NOT allow a suspected, but unproved, act of adultery to be punished. But Jesus says go and sin no more; I'll not condemn you.

Now, when Jesus says "Not Condemn", He didn't mean to just find her guilty; it also means to set out the punishment. It doesn't mean, like in our modern society, to declare before the whole world that what you did was wrong – "strongly condemns" the killers, etc. – merely words that the killers laugh at. The word "condemn" here really means being assigned the death penalty (CONDEMNED TO DEATH). The CURSE of the Law is condemnation for disobedience. The Curse IS condemnation.

Condemnation means receiving the death penalty. The curse of the Law isn't the Law itself; it's the death penalty that

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comes from violating the Law. Jesus was saying to the woman, "I hereby do not apply the death penalty to you even though you may deserve it".

This story in the NT book of John MUST be taken in the context of the Torah, as should all stories and observations and commentaries that form the New Testament. If we try to separate this event from our understanding that Jesus was a Torah observant Jew, and is Himself the author of the Torah, then we're going to miss the point on many of the things written about Him and in many of His recorded sayings.

The dragging of this woman accused of adultery before Jesus was simply a test (or a trap) by these Rabbis and Scribes who brought her to see if they could get Him to say something against the Law of Moses and thus He would be automatically discredited... it was a political ploy in a time of great political upheaval, Temple corruption, and intrigue in Judea.

SLIDE: THIS IS A CONTROVERSIAL PASSAGE

There are some things that need to be carefully noted about this story if we are to grasp its meaning. **First, I well understand that this is one of the most beloved stories in the New Testament** and so I am likely to tread on some folks feelings about it and I apologize in advance for challenging the conventional wisdom on this matter.

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This passage is most typically used to demonstrate a couple of things:

- 1) Jesus is all merciful, and
- 2) Sinners have no right to judge anyone else.

Those conclusions have become doctrines and mainstays of Christian institutions.

While we can debate whether one or both or neither or those conclusions ought to be a proper Christian doctrine, I don't believe that this is the point of this particular story in John 8. It probably has nothing to do with Jesus' mercy or of His requirement that only sinless people ought to be witnesses against another person or who can rightfully carry out judicial punishments on others.

Let's look at what happened here because there are some oddities about this story that have perplexed and upset many scholars and bible translators.

- This unnamed woman is brought before Jesus and He is told that she has committed adultery.
- Since her guilt is apparently not the issue with them, the only question these men have for Jesus is what He thinks her punishment ought to be.

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- In the most accepted Christian interpretations of this passage, the outcome essentially has Jesus telling the men that unless they have lived a sin-free life, they have no right to accuse her or to carry out any kind judicial punishment on this women (in this case, stoning).
- After these man have skulked away from the area in shame, Jesus is said to have determined in His mercy to ignore the crime the woman has committed (which according to the Law is among the worst of sins that can be committed), lets her off the hook, and says to be on her way and to not sin any more.
- There are to be no repercussions becausewell.....because Jesus has determined there shouldn't be any. And this story is explained as a great demonstration of His limitless mercy.

I want to state plainly here that I absolutely know that Jesus is merciful – without His death on the cross, I am lost. The cross is where God’s mercy and judgment meet! However, I see the application of mercy here as an *improbable interpretation* of this rather problematic story.

Let me tell you something that most folks don't realize: it is that this particular story about Jesus has so troubled Bible interpreters, In fact, some Bible translations do not even

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include it. This controversial narrative has been removed and added back in to the New Testament canon many times over the centuries.

Note – the NIV notation about the story

Why? **Because what is stated simply doesn't add up**; it doesn't seem to follow the pattern of Jesus' life, His pronouncements or His other actions, and it even calls into question His compliance to the very Torah that He and all the Apostles claim that He followed perfectly.

SLIDE: ODDITIES

- Here's what troubles scholars about the passage: there was absolutely no element of trust or faith in Jesus by the woman; belief was never asked of her. In fact, the text does not even implied that this woman had any idea who Jesus was. There was no acknowledgment of His status as the Messiah or as being of divine origin. She didn't ask for forgiveness nor was it offered per se.
- Another problem is that adultery was indeed a God-ordained capital offense as found in the Torah. It is so serious that it is part of the foundational principles for the entire Bible, the Ten Commandments.

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Jesus is the Word of God, He wrote the Torah so it's hard to imagine that He now disavowed its contents.

We will find no other story about Jesus that even remotely implies that He simply *dismisses* civil and criminal law breakers from the responsibility of their crimes. Rather, He rescued folks from the *spiritual* consequences of their trespasses. But there was always a caveat: faith in Him as God's Messiah, trust in Him. No trust in Him means no forgiveness and redemption.

Yet, by most interpretations, that is exactly what happened here. For some reason Jesus simply waved his hand, dismissed the crime, and said not to do it again. Unlikely.

SLIDE: ODDITIES #2

Now there is also a second aspect to consider and it involves the "let he who is without sin cast the first stone" comment. Joke: Catholic – Mary sinless: **Mom – put down that rock!**

The standard interpretation would have it that as sinners we have no business pointing out the sin in someone else. Some have gone so far as to say that in its strictest sense Jesus is teaching that only a completely sinless person can be

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a reliable witness to a crime, or that only a completely sinless person can be a person who orders judicial punishment, or that only a completely sinless person can execute capital punishment. Such an idea is simply unworkable and it would bring any kind of justice system to a standstill. By that standard no one can be accused, tried, convicted, or punished because there is no such thing as a sinless person to prosecute criminals.

Therefore this common interpretation **cannot be correct**, as many scholars have complained for literally hundreds of years. I do not think the story should be removed, because I think it happened and was correctly recorded. I believe that the problem lies in trying to make it fit into predisposed agendas rather than interpreting it in its Jewish cultural context.

Notice the circumstances. It is said by the accusers that she was "caught in the act" of adultery. But, was she? Were these upright and honorable men who were bringing this woman to Yeshua? No, these were representatives of a notorious and corrupt Temple system that sought to rid itself of this upstart young Rabbi who was making their lives a lot harder.

There is no way to know for sure whether the accusation of this group was true; I suspect that these men likely did not

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make a truthful statement or certainly the woman's husband would have been there to make the accusation; in fact by the Law such a thing was required. Then consider that the woman goes not admit any guilt – she kept silent. And, Jesus told her to go and *sin* no more.....not to go and NOT commit *adultery* anymore.

But, even IF she had actually been caught in the act, Torah required that there be AT LEAST TWO witnesses (including her husband in this case) who had to testify against a person accused of a capital crime.....and adultery was a capital crime.

SLIDE: THE WITNESSES BEGIN THE STONING

It was also **required** that the witnesses in a capital case **begin** the execution process. If this were applied to modern day, it would be the equivalent of the witnesses who were required to pull the lever for the Gas Chamber. The standard Jewish method of execution was stoning; and it was a requirement of Torah that the witnesses were not only present at the execution but THEY must be the first to throw the stones at the condemned person. (Deuteronomy 17:7).

There was a reason for this: it was a deterrent to false testimony. If a witness lied and it led to the death of an

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innocent person, then by their being part of the execution process they would have blood on their hands; they become murderers and would themselves be subject to execution. That's a pretty big incentive not to give false or frivolous testimony in a capital case.

Thus we have Jesus saying, "Let he who is without sin throw the first stone". Who throws the first stone in a Jewish execution? **The witnesses!** It is my opinion that when Jesus said "**he without sin**", He was likely not referring to sin in general. He was referring to the **sin of bearing false witness** in the matter, and maybe to some degree these men's impure motives for making this accusation in the first place. In this instance, the **PURPOSE** of the false witness against the woman was to entrap Jesus.

➤ **Jesus called their bluff.**

He told them that the witnesses should just go ahead and pick up their execution stones and throw them at her now, UNLESS they were participating in a sin; that is, they weren't telling the truth because they did not see the adultery themselves. Because if they were lying, or just going along with an assumption of this woman's guilt without actually knowing, and got caught –then they would be open to capital punishment.

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There is nothing here but a false accusation using a helpless woman in order to try to discredit Christ. Justice wasn't the issue, getting rid of Jesus was the issue. They wanted Him to say – let her go without punishment.

Since there is no HINT that this woman had confessed to her supposed crime, the Law says she should have been taken to the priests who would have performed the Numbers 5 water ordeal upon her.

SLIDE: JESUS WRITES IN THE DUST

Writing in the Dust – this has been the subject of many speculations down thru the years. Even though nothing more is ever said about Jesus writing in the dust in the NT, it has for some reason captured the imaginations of Christian teachers and Pastors. Why might He be writing?

Well, remember that in Numbers 5, we find that the focal point of the water-ordeal ritual is a special drink; and we find that there are 3 ingredients to the water concoction the woman is supposed to swallow: holy water, dust, and the ink from the letters of a vow.

- Holy water – Living water – Jesus was present!
- Before a priest – Jesus

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- **Dust** gathered from the Temple floor. Why did it need to be dust from the Temple floor? Because the dust HAD to be holy. The Temple was God's dwelling place. Anywhere God dwells contracts His holiness. They were currently on Temple grounds.

We see three elements of the law of Jealousy (Numbers 5) in the John 8 story of Jesus and the women. We see Jesus was inexplicably and mysteriously writing in the dust with his finger. What was He writing? We can't be sure, but it may have been Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh, the letters that form God's name.....that would have been the most consistent with the pattern set down in Numbers 5.

Jesus was simply displaying the REAL and original Torah....the Torah as given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Jesus IS living water, and He is also priest and also God, writing on holy dust with a woman accused of adultery standing before Him.

Seeing the sacred name of God – YHWH – written on the ground would have had an immediate impact on the Pharisees, who did know the scripture. They would immediately know Jesus was appealing to Numbers chapter 5 and the case of a woman suspected of adultery.

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This story is in many ways an irony. In John 8, these corrupt men had brought this woman before God for judgment, and they didn't even recognize what they were doing. Every ingredient of the God-ordained ritual of the water ordeal of jealousy was present – priest, God, holy water, holy dust, and holy writings all performed at the required location: the Temple.

SLIDE:

The Torah was followed: she was stood before the Lord, and the priest... our High Priest in this case... applied ALL the law to her. Jesus, seeing no witnesses against her, no one to condemn her, which is the requirement of the law of PROVEN adultery in Leviticus, then moved to the law of SUSPECTED adultery of Numbers 5, the test of the water ordeal, and each and every element of it ... water, dust, and writing... was used. Of course, **as He was God on earth**, there was less need that she drinks a holy water mixture and **wait** for the results as the sign of God's judgment in the matter.

WHY DO I GO INTO THIS AT ALL?

Because we all occasionally need to be reminded that Jesus was a Torah-observant Jew and thus we need to view what Jesus did through Jewish eyes. Today, criticism of the

Ordeal of Jealousy

Torah is rampant, both outside and inside of the Christian Church.

The mandates of the Torah are often portrayed as primitive and foreign to the progressive liberal view of Jesus. Sacrificing animals and offering the blood to God as atonement for sin is described as barbaric and reflective of a primitive culture – out of step with our enlightened society and Christianity. (I wonder how many Orthodox Jews join PETA?)

Jesus followed the Torah perfectly – He believed that He needed to follow the Torah to qualify as the Messiah, including fulfilling the Levitical sacrificial system's purpose. Jesus went to the Cross following the Torah. I want to reiterate what I stated at the beginning: God's promise to dwell with mankind was made to the Israel, not to everyone.

God made His covenant with Israel, not with anyone else. St Paul says that Israel is the root – We are grafted into Israel by believing in the Jewish messiah, – those who were physically born in Israel but did not accept Him were branches broken off to make room for us. **We are assured that God the Father will keep His part of the covenant promises to us because Jesus kept our part of the promises to Him.**

Ordeal of Jealousy

Do we need to know all this – this Jewish heritage – to be saved? No. You only need to trust in the Messiah. But, if we're corporately destined to dwell with Him for all eternity, I suggest that we may want to better know Who we're marrying.