

פרשת

נשא

Parashat Naso

Bamidbar / Numbers 4:21-7:89, Judges 13:2-5
John 11:1-54

Pretending to be Holy on the Outside

In this week's Torah portion (Parashat Naso) the Lord speaks to Moshe to instruct the people in regard to making a distinction between the clean and unclean saying the following, א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, לְאמֹר: ב צוּ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּישְׁלַחוּ מִן-הַמַּחֲנֶה כָּל-צָרוּעַ וְכָל-זָב וְכָל טָמֵא לְנֶפֶשׁ: ג מִזְכָּר עַד-נְקֵבָה תִּשְׁלַחוּ אֶל-מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה תִּשְׁלַחוּם וְלֹא יִטְמְאוּ אֶת-5:1 *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 5:2 'Command the sons of Israel that they send away from the camp every leper and everyone having a discharge and everyone who is unclean because of a dead person. 5:3 'You shall send away both male and female; you shall send them outside the camp so that they will not defile their camp where I dwell in their midst.'* (NASB) *Tur HaAruch on Bamidbar / Numbers 5:2 Part 1*, states these kinds of people are to be removed from the encampment of Israel having varying degrees of impurity is to prevent the entire camp from becoming infected with ritual impurity which would drive away the Shechinah (glory, presence) of God which rests upon the encampment and the people. We are told, on the contraction of impurity, it was obligatory that the unclean person avoid that which is holy and take steps, involving the rituals for disposal of impurity, to return to a ritual state of cleanness. Unclean-

ness placed a person in a “*dangerous*” condition under which may lead to divine involvement and even death (*Vayikra / Leviticus 15:31*), The reason being, the unfaithful person will not taking the proper steps of Teshuvah and may approach the sanctuary without regard to God’s Word. Modern theologies today do not address the importance of making the distinction between what is clean and unclean in the eyes of God and His people. Based upon the Scriptures, Teshuvah (Repentance) is also important to the concept of clean and unclean. Rambam in his Mishneh Torah on repentance (2:2) states that Teshuvah is when the wicked abandons his path and regrets his sin to never return to it. He must confess verbally and admit these things that he has committed in his heart and his actions. One of the most clear purposes on making the distinction between what is clean and unclean was to separate God’s people from sin and from the way of the Gentiles. The clean-unclean system divided animals, people, and land into three categories. In the animal realm there are clean animals that are described as acceptable to be sacrificed on an altar. There were also clean animals (wild game or fish) that may be eaten but not sacrificed on an altar. And there are unclean animals that ritually defiled the eater and may not be used as a sacrifice, where some of these animals are called an abomination before God (*Vayikra / Leviticus 11:10–13-41 and Devarim / Deuteronomy 14:3*). The separation among animals parallels that of people. We are told according to the Torah the Priests were “*holy*” and separated from other Israelites for service in the sanctuary, whereas the ordinary Israelite was to be “*clean*” and separated from those who are not according to *Bamidbar / Numbers 5:1-3*. Note that this applies further to the nations as being unclean in the sense of separating us from their wicked idolatrous practices (*Vayikra / Leviticus 18:26–30, Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:1-5, 7:25-26, 20:17-18*). Note that there is a similar system of separation of space within the tabernacle as holy and most holy (the holy of holies). This system of purity also reinforced the teaching elsewhere that Israel was a “*holy nation*” (*Shemot / Exodus 19:6*) and set apart for the service of God. In keeping the Kashrut laws, God’s people were acknowledging that the Lord God had chosen and saved them from the nations. In addition, the kashrut laws discouraged table fellowship with the Canaanites whose diet would ordinarily include the pig and other items designated as “*unclean.*” Note how the pig

pretends to be clean externally, but is not so internally, indicated by its lack of chewing the cud. The requirements of the Torah were thus a practical means of maintaining God's people as a holy nation. This is stated explicitly saying *"You must therefore make a distinction between the clean and the unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourself by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground—those which I have set apart as unclean for you. You are to be holy to me because I the LORD am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own"* (*Vayikra / Leviticus 20:25–26*) These things were important then, but what about now? The making a distinction between what is clean and unclean reveals something hidden within the secret part of our hearts and motivations for what we choose to do (*Hebrews 4:12-14*). This is an important factor in our lives as it is related to God's presence upon our lives and as we choose to walk in the footsteps of the Messiah Yeshua. Do you truly seek the holiness and righteousness of God in your life, or are you only putting on a show for others to see as demonstrated in the deception of uncleanness? Let's discuss these things further in this week's Torah portion.

This week we are looking at *Bamidbar / Numbers 5:1-10*:

Bamidbar / Numbers 5:1-10

5:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 5:2 'Command the sons of Israel that they send away from the camp every leper and everyone having a discharge and everyone who is unclean because of a dead person. 5:3 'You shall send away both male and female; you shall send them outside the camp so that they will not defile their camp where I dwell in their midst.' 5:4 The sons of Israel did so and sent them outside the camp; just as the Lord had spoken to Moses, thus the sons of Israel did. 5:5 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 5:6 'Speak to the sons of Israel, 'When a man or woman commits any of the sins of mankind, acting unfaithfully against the Lord, and that person is guilty, 5:7 then he shall confess his sins which he has committed, and he shall make restitution in full for his wrong and add to it one-

fifth of it, and give it to him whom he has wronged. 5:8 'But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution which is made for the wrong must go to the Lord for the priest, besides the ram of atonement, by which atonement is made for him. 5:9 'Also every contribution pertaining to all the holy gifts of the sons of Israel, which they offer to the priest, shall be his. 5:10 'So every man's holy gifts shall be his; whatever any man gives to the priest, it becomes his.' (NASB)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב צו אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁ-
לְחוּ מִן-הַמִּחְנֶה כָּל-צָרוּעַ וְכָל-זָב וְכָל טָמֵא לְנֶפֶשׁ: ג מִזְכָּר
עַד-נְקֵבָה תִּשְׁלַחוּ אֶל-מַחֲוִיץ לַמִּחְנֶה תִּשְׁלָחוּם וְלֹא יִטְמְאוּ
אֶת-מַחְנֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי שׂוֹכֵן בְּתוֹכָם: ד וַיַּעֲשׂוּ-כֵן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וַיִּשְׁלַחוּ אוֹתָם אֶל-מַחֲוִיץ לַמִּחְנֶה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה
כִּן עָשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ ה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
ו דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אוֹ-אִשָּׁה כִּי יַעֲשׂוּ מְכַל-חֲטָאת
הָאֵדָם לְמַעַל מַעַל בִּיהוָה וְאִשְׁמָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא: ז וְהִתְדוּ
אֶת-חֲטָאתָם אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ וְהִשִּׁיב אֶת-אֲשָׁמוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וְחִמִּישְׁתּוֹ
יִסֹּף עָלָיו וְנָתַן לְאֲשֶׁר אָשֵׁם לוֹ: ח וְאִם-אֵין לְאִישׁ גֹּאֵל
לְהִשִּׁיב הָאֲשָׁם אֵלָיו הָאֲשָׁם הַמּוֹשֵׁב לִיהוָה לִכְפֹּת מְלֶבֶד אֵיל
הַכִּפָּרִים אֲשֶׁר יִכְפֹּר-בּוֹ עָלָיו: ט וְכָל-תְּרוּמָה לְכָל-קֹדְשֵׁי
בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרִיבוּ לִכְפֹּת לוֹ יִהְיֶה: י וְאִישׁ אֶת-קֹדְשׁוֹ
לוֹ יִהְיֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִתֵּן לִכְפֹּת לוֹ יִהְיֶה:

This week's Torah portion (Parashat Naso) the Lord speaks to Moshe to instruct the people in regard to making a distinction between the clean and unclean beginning with the kinds of people who are to be removed from the encampment of Israel having varying degrees of impurity. This was important because certain types of impurity are unseen while others are seen (i.e. Tzaraat). Impurity may also result from a type of sin that is active in one's life. The idea is to prevent the entire camp from becoming infected by this persons unfaithfulness to the Lord. These Scriptures describe unfaithfulness and sin as an infec-

tious disease capable of driving away the Shechinah (glory, presence) of God which rests upon the congregation of people. We are told, upon the contraction of impurity, it was obligatory that the unclean person avoid that which is holy and take steps, involving the rituals for disposal of impurity, to return to a ritual state of cleanness. Note how if these people were allowed to remain in the camp, they would have been less motivated to take the necessary steps to repent before God.

The Mishnaic rabbis have following to say concerning these Scriptures on clean and unclean.

Mishnah Yoma 8:9

(9) One who says, "I will sin, and then repent, I will sin [again], and then repent," will not receive an opportunity to repent; [for one who says] "I will sin, and Yom Kippur will atone," Yom Kippur will not atone. Yom Kippur atones for transgressions between a person and God, but for a transgression against one's neighbor, Yom Kippur cannot atone, until he appeases his neighbor. Thus R. Eleazar ben Azariah expounds the text, "From all your sins before the Lord shall ye be clean": For transgressions between a person and God, Yom Kippur atones, for transgressions against one's neighbor, Yom Kippur cannot atone, until he appeases his neighbor. R. Akiva says, Happy are you, Israel! Before whom are you purified, and who purifies you [of your transgressions]? Your Father Who is in heaven. For it is said, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean"; and it is also said, "The ritual bath [lit. Hope] of Israel is the Lord"; even as a ritual bath purifies the unclean, so does the Holy One, Blessed be He, purify Israel. משנה יומא ח' ט' (ט) האומר, אחטא ואשוב, אחטא) ואשוב, אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה. אחטא ויום הכפורים מכפר, אין יום הכפורים מכפר. עברות שבין אדם למקום, יום הכפורים מכפר. עברות שבין אדם לחברו, אין יום הכפורים מכפר, עד שירצה את חברו. את זו דרש רבי אלעזר בן עזריה, [ויקרא טז:ל] "מכל חטאתיכם לפני ה'

תטהרו,“ עברות שבין אדם למקום, יום הכפורים מכפר; עברות שבין אדם לחברו, אין יום הכפורים מכפר, עד שיִרצה את חברו. אמר רבי עקיבא, אשריכם ישראל, לפני מי אתם מטהרין, ומי מטהר אתכם, אביכם שבשמים, שנאמר, [יחזקאל לו:כה] “וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם.” ואומר, [ירמיה יז:יג] “מקוה ישראל הִיא”, מה מקוה מטהר (את הטמאים, אף הקדוש ברוך הוא מטהר את ישראל.

The Mishnah discusses the idea of the one who says in their heart *“I will sin and then repent”* having a form of premeditation to sin disregarding the fact that the Lord wants us to turn from our sins and not return to them. The rabbis say, for such a person there is no atonement. They use the example of Yom Kippur with the idea that everyone goes to Synagogue and pretends to be good people, believing the Lord will forgive, but when returning to the normality of life leaving the high holy day(s) one returns to sinful living with no regard for God’s ways of righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth. The Mishnah says such a person will not receive an opportunity to repent and that Yom Kippur will not atone. The Torah says that when we commit a transgression against another human being, we are to make restitution to them by adding one fifth to make right with your brother. This is consistent with what Yeshua taught in *Matthew 5:24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. (NASB)* The point here is what the Mishnah is teaching that the sacrifice will not make atonement until the wrong was made right with your brother. The Mishnah connects our relationship with others to our relationship with the Lord. Making right with our brother reveals the hidden motivation of our heart. This is why our relationship with others is connected to our relationship with the Lord. Rashi makes the same conclusion stating the following:

Rashi on Bamidbar / Numbers 5:6 Part 1

למעל מעל בה. הרי חזר וכתב פאן פֶרֶשֶׁת גֹזֵל וְנִשְׁבַּע עַל שְׁקֵר, היא הָאֲמוּרָה בְּפֶרֶשֶׁת וַיִּקְרָא “וּמַעֲלָה מַעַל בֵּה” וְכִחֵשׁ בְּעֵמִיתוֹ וְגו’“, וְנִשְׁנִית פֶּאן בְּשִׁבִיל שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים שְׁנִתְחַדְּשׁוּ בֵה, הָאֶחָד שְׁכַתְּב “וְהִתְדוּ”, לִמַּד שְׁאִינוּ חֵיב חוֹמֵשׁ וְאִשָּׁם

ע' פ' עדים עד שְׂיֹדָה בְּדָבָר, וְהִשָּׁנִי עַל גְּזֹל הַגֵּר שֶׁהוּא נָתַת [WHEN A MAN OR WOMAN SHALL DO ANY OF THE SINS AGAINST MAN,] TO ACT DECEITFULLY AGAINST THE LORD — Here, you see, Scripture writes down again the section dealing with a person who robs by violence from another, and swears falsely regarding it, — it is the same section that has already been stated in the Sedrah ויקרא (Lev 5:21), “[If a soul sin], and commits a trespass against the Lord, and deny unto his neighbor etc.” The reason why it is repeated here is because of two new points which are contained in it. The one is that it (Scripture) writes here, “and if they confess” which teaches that one is not liable to payment of the fifth (in addition to the capital; cf. Leviticus 5:24), nor to bring a guilt offering (cf. Leviticus 5:25) if he is convicted by the evidence of witnesses, but only when he himself confesses the matter (his guilt). The second new point is about something stolen from a proselyte (cf. Rashi on v. 8) — that it has to be handed over to the priests (cf. Sifrei Bamidbar 2).

Rashi states directly when one is deceitful to man one is being deceitful against the Lord God of Israel. He states, “Here, you see, Scripture writes down again the section dealing with a person who robs by violence from another, and swears falsely regarding it.” The reason our deceitfulness to others is synonymous to being deceitful to the Lord is because the Lord works in our hearts, where the Torah describes t his as the Lord circumcises our hearts so as to obey his Word (instructions, Torah). When we act deceitfully against another human being, it demonstrates our resistance to the Lord’s work in our lives. This resistance to the Lord working in our hearts is contrary to what David wrote in *Tehillim / Psalms 119*. The one who determines his heart to do what is right and to walk in God’s ways out of his love for the Lord will ask the same question David did when he said the following, ט בְּמָה יִזְכֶּה־נַעַר אֶת-אָרְחוֹ לְשֹׁמֵר כְּדִבְרֶיךָ: 119:9 *How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. (NASB)* This is what faith

leads us to do, to seek the Lord God of Israel for help to keep our way pure, righteous, holy, and true to His word. This is the struggle that all true believers face, the war that is taking place between the spirit and the flesh. In this struggle we find the duality of the Torah and its multiplicity of purpose. The one function of the Torah is to show man how sinful he is and that he stands condemned before a righteous God. This is not all the Torah does however because it leads us to seek the Lord God of Israel, as the Torah describes at His Tabernacle bringing with us the atoning sacrifice. This is why when we go before the Lord seeking His forgiveness, we bring with us our faith in Yeshua His Messiah! Only by trusting in God for His salvation, and purposing our life in Teshuvah (Repentance) to walk in His ways are we able to escape judgment (*1 John 2:4*).

Sforno has a similar conclusion saying in his commentary the following:

Sforno on Deuteronomy 30:11:1

כי המצוה הזאת, and the reason that I said in verse 1 that the repentance must be wholehearted and among the nations, i.e. while you are still in exile, is so that it can trigger your salvation. For, indeed this commandment, i.e. the one to return to G'd in sincere penitence אשר אנכי מצוך היום, Moses reminds the people that in the list of sacrifices in Leviticus 5,5 et al, where various kinds of sin and guilt offerings are listed as means to expiate for the error committed, the essential refrain is always “והתוודה אשר חטא,” that the guilty person first confesses his mistake, his sin, even the one committed inadvertently. Compare also Numbers 5,6-7)

Again here the generally consensus is that Repentance is necessary for atonement. In fact, Sforno states that it is repentance that triggers salvation. The point is if we find ourselves grieved due to sin and seeking to do Teshuvah, we demonstrate we belong to the Lord and are children of Abraham (see *John 8*). The Scriptures teach us that true repentance will result in a change of actions (*Luke 3:8-14; Acts 3:19*). It is impossible to truly and fully change our minds without this also causing a

change in our actions. The Scriptures speak of repentance as it results in a change in behavior. That is why John Hamatbil (baptizer) called people to “*produce fruit in keeping with repentance*” (*Matthew 3:8*). This conclusion is the same for our faith in Yeshua. If a man is unrepentant, having faith in Yeshua will have no effect in atonement for sin. Sforno states that Moshe taught us of these things in the Sacrifices listed in *Vayikra / Leviticus 5*. The Torah teaches us about the essential part of Teshuvah (Repentance) in the life of God’s people demonstrating why it is so important to study the five books of Moshe each year.

The rabbis go on to interpret repentance in the following way:

Sefer HaChinukh 364:1

We are commanded to confess our sins before HaShem, at such time that we feel remorse for them. The basic form of confession is to say as part of repentance, “I have sinned in such and such ways.” The sin must be explicitly enunciated. He should then seek atonement and extend his words in this matter according to his fluency. The Sages taught that even sins that require the bringing of a sin-offering still demand confession with the offering, and on this the verse says, “Speak to the children of Israel [saying], a man or woman who commits any sin and rebels against HaShem, that soul is guilty and they should confess the sins that they did.” (Num. 5:6) The Sages taught in the Mechilta, “Since it says ‘confess the sin’ (Lev. 5:5) it means that the sin must be extant, that is alive and not slaughtered.” This mean that the animal to be offered must still be alive. They also said, “We see that one must confess if he profanes the sacred. How do you know that it includes all mitzvot? (That is, since the verse is Vayikra only explicitly discussing profaning the sacred, how do we know to include all other mitzvot). Form the verse, ‘Speak to the children of Israel ...’ (That is, we understand these two verses as if they were written as one.) How do we know to include sins that are punishable by death? From the confession of Aaron [which reads] ‘for all their sins’.” The Sages used this

verse to include all negative commandments, and the 'that they did' to include positive commandments, that is, any time a person has the opportunity to fulfill a positive commandment and does not do so he must confess. The also derived in the Mechilta from the verse "all the sins of man" that sins like theft and gossip also require confession, though he must also make amends, and if he does not do so it would be better not to confess. "To rebel" includes all those sentenced to death who must also confess. I might have thought to include even those falsely convicted, that is, the condemned maintains his innocence, and to demand that they confess. The verse teaches, "the soul that is guilty" to exclude the person who knows that is falsely convicted. Hence we understand that all sins, large and small, must be confessed.

The rabbis say that we are commanded to confess our sins before HaShem. This is important as we are called to make a distinction between what is clean and unclean in our lives to recognize our sins and confess them before the Lord. This reveals something hidden within the secret part of our hearts and speaks to the motivation of our heart, where we take responsibility for our deeds and seek the Lord to forgive us (see [Hebrews 4:12-14](#)). This is an important part of our lives as it is related to God's presence upon our lives as we choose to walk in the footsteps of the Messiah Yeshua. We understand this based upon the Torah command in the animal sacrifices, when one repents, the commentary states the animal must still be alive. This means a person repents and confesses his sin prior to receiving atonement. A sin is related to having violated a negative command, and atonement includes making right with the one who has been wronged.

The commentary speaks of performing positive commands and confession, if one neglects or fails to perform a positive command he is to confess and seek forgiveness. This leads us to understand that we are called to do good deeds (righteous deeds, see [Ephesians 2:10](#)). The conclusion is *"Hence we understand that all sins, large and small, must be confessed."* All the mitzvot in the Torah, whether positive or negative, if a person transgresses them, whether he did so intentionally or

unaware, he is to repent and turn from his sin, and when he does so, he is to confess before God what he has done. (*Bamidbar / Numbers 5:6-7*) The rabbis speak of the importance of a verbal confession before the Lord. This confession is to be in the following form: *“Please God, I have sinned, I have erred, I have [willfully but unrebliously] transgressed, I have done such-and-such [specific sins], I am regretful, and ashamed for my actions, and I will never again return to my old ways.”* This is believed to be an essential part of the Torah command to confess our sins before God. This is also consistent with John’s teaching in *1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (NASB)* The opinion from ancient times is *“at the time when they bring sacrifices for their unintentional or intentional sins, [the sacrifices] do not atone for them until they repent [do teshuvah] and confess verbally [do vidui], as it says, he shall confess the matter in which he sinned (Leviticus 5:5).”* If repentance is not coupled to seeking forgiveness, there is no atonement even for those who say they believe in Yeshua the Messiah. Until one repents (does Teshuvah) and confesses verbally, there is no atonement. The rabbis also say, *“... someone who has injured his fellow or damaged his property, even though he has repaid what he owes him, he has not atoned until he confesses and turns away from similar actions forever, as it says, From any of the sins of man (Numbers 5:6).”* This is the significance of making the distinction between what is clean and unclean in our lives. We are called to send forth the iniquity that is in our hearts never to return to them. If one does not confess, one is holding onto that iniquity which darkens the heart and the soul. This is very similar to the pig who pretends to be clean externally, but is not so internally, indicated by its outward appearance to be clean, but inwardly is full of deceit. The requirements of the Torah are a practical means for God’s people. The making a distinction between what is clean and unclean reveals something hidden within our hearts, the motivations for what we choose to do (*Hebrews 4:12-14*). This is important for us to understand as these things are related to God’s presence upon our lives as we choose to walk in the footsteps of the Messiah Yeshua. Do you truly seek the holiness and righteousness of God in your life, or are you pretend to be holy on the outside?

