

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Nasso	15 June, 2019	12 Sivan 5779	Num 4:21-7:89	Judges 13:2-25	Luke 1:11-20

It is said, traditionally that the ashes of nine Red Heifer were used up to the Second Temple era. The first Red Heifer was used for about a thousand year from the period of Moshe to Ezra who returned from the 70-year exile in Babylonia. Next eight Red Heifers were used for about 400 years during the period of Ezra to the Second Temple which indicates sins were rampant. The ashes of the tenth Red Heifer will be used to purify the sinners when the Messiah returns.

In Numbers 5:2, while the verse describes leper, discharge, and defiled for a being in literal sense, it also applies to people in a spiritual manner. The leprosy occurs when a person commits sins against Hashem. A discharge is from copulations, and defiled a being means who came in contact with the dead. So, this verse is describing a level of impurity from the highest to the lowest.

The verses from Numbers 5:6-8 discusses about the theft. There are three types of theft. First is stealing behind your back, i.e. taking property without your knowledge. Second is a theft in your face, i.e. shoplifting. Last is a theft by force, i.e. robbery.

Now, verse 7 starts with “And they shall confess their sin which they have done. And he shall restore his guilt in its principal, plus one-fifth of it, and gives it to whom he has been guilty.” The verse started with plural and yet ends with a singular sentence. “They” implies to individuals who committed a crime and the application of penalty depending upon their conviction. If a policeman makes the arrest, then the offender is to pay double of its stolen value. If the offender turns in voluntarily and confesses his sin, then he pays for the value of stolen property. If the offender is found guilty in the court, then he is to pay the value of stolen property plus 20% of its value.

Another layer of understanding: This verse deals with theft and since only one person is a thief, why does it start with “they shall confess” (וְהִתְוַדּוּ, *ve-hit-vad-du*) instead of “he shall confess” (וְהִתְוַדָּה, *ve-hit-vad-dah*)? Second question, since the commandment to confess one’s sin is the cornerstone of the *mitzvah* (deed) of repentance, why does it choose to mention it here in connection with the sin of stealing?

The answer is: This verse deals with two people between a lender and a borrower without witnesses where the borrower denies of receiving the loan by swearing falsely that he owes nothing. Obviously, if there are witnesses, the borrower is unable to deny of receiving the loan or swear to that effect.

The Gemara¹ says that we should extend a loan in the presence of witnesses to avoid violating the Torah law “do not put a stumbling block before the blind.” (Lev. 19:14) The “stumbling block” is where a borrower may be tempted to deny the loan entirely. Thus, the borrower who denies the loan sins by false testimony and the lender who gave the money without witnesses or a contract also sinned. Therefore, “they shall both confess” by having witnesses or a written contract. Thus, they resolve not to repeat their sin in the future.

The answer to second question: Every sin that a person commits is partially an act of theft. Hashem gives the person energy, strength, and wants him to utilize it for Torah study and fulfilling mitzvot (deeds). Thus,

¹ BT, Bava Metzia 75b

when a person uses his energy committing sin, he is “stealing” from Hashem. Therefore, the *mitzvah* of confession is mentioned in connection with stealing.

Verse 8 applies to an individual who converted to the nation of Yisrael by accepting Hashem as his Elohim. The convert, once he becomes an Yisraelite loses his parents or his siblings spiritually. He can continue to commune with them on a physical level, but spiritually he is divorced from his family if they did not convert. As such, if a convert dies and a thief is later arrested or admits of his guilt, the money does not go to the convert’s family. Instead it goes to Hashem via priests.

Verses 9 and 10 refers to the Bikkurim (First-fruit offering) that is offered to the priests from Shavuot to Sukkot. A donor can give his offerings to any priest on duty to receive blessings. Or he can give the offering to the priest of his choice.

Verses 11-31 discusses the laws of unfaithful wife (Sotah). The unfaithful wife is a wife who commits adultery. While this law applies immoral sexual behavior, it also applies when she refuses to follow the commandments of Hashem. We will discuss in a physical aspect to understand the spiritual level.

In verse 14, it says, “And a spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife who has defiled herself, or a spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife although she has not defiled herself.” The first part of this verse says that the “spirit of jealousy comes upon” a husband when his wife committed adultery. The second part of this verse applies to a husband who suspects of his wife being defiled “although she has not defiled herself.” Both situations require to go through prescribed rituals from later verses.

While “a spirit of jealousy” is given by Hashem, there are two distinct differentiation: first part applies to an actual defilement that leads to the punishment while the second part applies Hashem’s desire to give them His blessings. If a woman is barren, then she will be given a child. She will not have a birth pain, and the child will be handsome or pretty and very intellectual.

If the woman is unfaithful, then she and her conspirator are punished through death. Now, let’s say that the woman was indeed unfaithful and she went through the ritual, but she did not die nor show any symptoms of suffering. The sages teach that she did not die because her husband was also unfaithful to her.

Now, the Sotah is a shameful ritual whether she is defiled or not. For her embarrassment, if she was not defiled, she will be rewarded as previously mentioned. If she is indeed defiled but did not want to go through the ritual by confessing to her husband, he can decide: One, he can divorce her. Second, he can continue to live with her. In either case, she will lose her entitlement given to her during the marriage vow.

Now, the *nazir*. What is the difference between vows and oaths? A vow is when a person dedicates himself to the task wholly to accomplish something. For example: A person commits himself not to eat peaches for a whole year despite his yearnings for it. Whereas, an oath is to accomplish something who is required to answer for it. For example, a person is required to testify in court to answer questions asked by a judge.

Since the law of a *nazir* apply only to the *nazir* himself, why did the angel tell Shimshon’s (Samson’s) mother that she should not drink wine? (Judges 13:2-25) The answer is: Many parents set ambitious goals for their children and expect them to live by lofty standards. Unfortunately, they fail to realize their own

need to live by their own standards they set for their children. Parents must conduct themselves the way they want their children to behave.²

Therefore, the angel was giving Shimshon's mother an important lesson in raising him. The angel told her that her son was destined to be a *nazir*. Thus, it was necessary for her to observe the laws of Nazirite, a living example for Shimshon to observe his restrictions.

In verse 6:7, a *nazir* is not permitted to participate in the funeral of a family member. A *kohen* (priest) can attend the funeral of his family member but not a *nazir*? The sages said that a *nazir* attains his holiness on his own, and it has no connection to his family; whereas a *kohen* receives his holiness from his family. A *kohen gadol* (high priest) also is not permitted to attend the funeral of a family member. Although, he obtained his *kohen* status through his family, he became a *kohen gadol* as a result of his own efforts by his excellence over all other *kohanim* (priests) as said, "The priest that is highest among his brethren." (Num. 21:10)

What sin did the *nazir* commit so that he needs to bring a sin-offering? (Num. 6:11-14) There are three things that a *nazir* takes upon himself. First, not to drink wine. Second, not to come in contact with a corpse. Third, to let his hair grow wild.

Wine is a sign of happiness and it is customary to drink wine on joyous occasions. By refraining from drinking wine, the *nazir* declares that he has no desire to participate in the joy of others.

By avoiding contact with the corpse, he is failing to sympathize with others' sufferings and shunning sad occasions.

Letting his hair grow wild means that he does not care if people stay away from him, because they do not want to interact with "a strange looking" man.

Thus, all three restrictions involve withdrawal from society. As such, his lifestyle is considered sinful and require forgiveness.

With all the trouble of being a *nazir*, why do some choose to be a *nazir*? The Kabbalah teaches that the beard represents mercy while the hair represents judgments. They chose to be a *nazir*, mainly to overcome their *yetzer hara* (evil inclination), i.e. pride, ego.

² Vedibarta Bam, Bemidbar, R' Moshe Bogomilsky