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MINISTRIES

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Parashah Points: Nasso - Outside the Camp

Welcome to another episode of Parashah Points—short thoughts from the weekly Torah Portion.

This week’s Parashah Point comes from Nasso, which is Hebrew for “Take up,” and it goes from Numbers 4:21 to Numbers 7:89.

This Torah portion addresses the duties of the priests, purification of the camp, laws of restitution, laws concerning the wife who is accused of adultery, laws for Nazirites, and the priestly blessing.

There’s a lot we can talk about in this Torah Portion. Today we’re going to talk about the laws regarding putting people outside of the camp and what it might teach us about congregational discipline.

Numbers 5:1-4

The Lord [YHWH] spoke to Moses, saying, “Command the people of Israel that they put out of the camp everyone who is leprous or has a discharge and everyone who is unclean through contact with the dead. You shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell.” And the people of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp; as the Lord [YHWH] said to Moses, so the people of Israel did.

This passage instructs Israel to quarantine those who become ritually impure. Why? YHWH says, “[So they may not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell.](#)” Evidently, the ritual impurity of one person could impact everyone else in the camp. Therefore, the ritually impure person was to be put outside of the camp until they became pure again.

This passage is a good reminder of the fact that, for better or worse, we have the capability of influencing others. One person could potentially harm an entire group and negatively affect everyone’s relationship to God.

The apostle Paul addressed one such scenario. A member of the Church of Corinth was engaged in sexual immorality. Paul’s instructions were to “[let him who has done this be removed from among you](#)”

(1 Corinthians 5:3).

Why was it important that the unrepentant sinner be removed from among the congregation? Paul tells us:

1 Corinthians 5:6

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

One person in sinful rebellion could hurt the entire congregation, just like a little leaven leavens a whole batch of dough. Thus, sometimes a congregation must make the difficult decision to break fellowship with an individual who refuses to repent of their sin after they are confronted about it. They must be “put outside of the camp,” if you will.

Yeshua describes how this process is to work in Matthew 18:15-17. The goal of the process is not only to protect the congregation but also to work toward restoration—that is, bringing the wayward sinner back into the fold. This goal is perhaps why Yeshua’s difficult instructions on how to address sin in the congregation are cushioned between a parable expressing God’s love for the sheep that goes astray and another parable on the value of forgiveness.

While we do hope for restoration, sin must be taken seriously—there are serious consequences for rebellion.

The first step in addressing sin in the congregation is to confront the individual in private (Matthew 18:15). If he or she refuses to repent, Yeshua instructs us to take one or two witnesses to establish the charge against the individual (Matthew 18:16). If he or she still refuses to repent, then the matter is handed over to the leaders of the congregation who “tell it to the church” (Matthew 18:17). Messianic theologian, Tim Hegg, writes:

Though the present text does not give procedural details, it seems certain that after refusing to respond appropriately to the first and second approaches, the matter is given over to the leaders of the assembly (elders / overseers) who then must make the matter known to the community as a whole.

-Tim Hegg, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2010), p. 788

If the individual refuses to listen to the congregation, Yeshua says to “[let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.](#)” That is, the congregation must exclude the individual. Again, this is done in hopes that the shame of the rebellious sinner’s exclusion might eventually move them to repent so they could be restored.

These are certainly difficult but necessary instructions for us today. May God give us and our congregational leaders wisdom that we may treat these serious matters righteously and in love.

Thank you for joining us for another Parashah Point!

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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