

**Parshat Naso**  
**Banishment of Impurities as An Act of Love**  
**Chana Borow - Class of 2026**

The beginning of Parshat Naso is seemingly a continuation of Parshat Bamidbar, where God counts everyone who is in the camp of Israel, a sign of God's love, according to Rashi. This sign of love is then contrasted with the banishment of anyone with impurities from the camp:

צו את בני ישראל וישלחו מן המחנה כל צרוע וכל זב וכל טמא לגפוש: מזכר עד נקבה תשלחו אל מחוץ למחנה תשלחום ולא יטמאו את מחניהם אשר אני שכן בתוכם: ויעשו כן בני ישראל וישלחו אותם אל מחוץ למחנה כאשר דבר יהוה אל משה כן עשו בני ישראל: (במדבר ה:ב-ד)

Instruct the Israelites to remove from camp anyone with an eruption or a discharge and anyone defiled by a corpse. Remove male and female alike; put them outside the camp so that they do not defile the camp of those in whose midst I dwell. The Israelites did so, putting them outside the camp; as YKVK had spoken to Moses, so the Israelites did. (Numbers 5:2-4)

The *parsha* then moves on quickly, leaving us with many questions and moral dilemmas around casting out our own people. I find the most prominent of these moral dilemmas to be kicking people out for something they may not have control over. How is it ethical to kick out members of your own community after they have gone through something, often unwillingly, that puts them in a vulnerable place? Aren't we a religion that is supposed to welcome and accept those around us without judgment? Rashi subtly addresses these issues by attempting to make this harsh decree somewhat softer:

וישלחו מן המחנה. שלש מחנות היו שם בשעת חגיתן, תוך הקלעים היא מחנה שכניה, חגית הלויים סביב כמו שמפרש בפרשת במדבר סיני, היא מחנה לוי, ומשם ועד סוף מחנה הדגלים לכל ארבע הרוחות היא מחנה ישראל; הצרוע נשתלח חוץ לכלן, הזב מתר במחנה ישראל ומשלח מן השתים, וטמא לגפוש מתר אף בשל לוי, ואינו משלח אלא משל שכניה... (רש"י על במדבר ה: ב)

**[Command the Children of Israel] that they send away from the camp [every leper etc.]** — There were three camps one within the other whenever they encamped: the area within the hangings was the “camp of the Shechinah,” the encampment of the Levites round about this... was the “camp of the Levites,” and from there outward up to the end of the encampment of the divisions in all the four directions was the “camp of the Israelites.” The

leper was sent out from all of them; the person suffering from a flux was allowed to stay in the “camp of the Israelites,” but was sent out from the two inner camps, whilst a person who had become unclean by reason of a corpse was allowed to stay in the “camp of the Levites” also, and was sent out only from that of the Shechinah... (Rashi on Numbers 5:2)

Rashi still does not address the root of the issue, though, the fact that we are expelling our own people from our midst. Rabbi Mordechai Yosef Leiner (1801-1854), more commonly known as the Ishbitzer Rebbe, offers another interpretation:

וישלחו מן המחנה כל צרוע וכל זב וכל טמא לנפש. צרוע הוא כעס כי צרעת הוא בעון לשון הרע (ערכין ט"ו): זב הוא בעל תאוה, וטמא לנפש הוא עצבות. ולכן הצרוע נשתלח משלש המחנות כי מדות כעס אין לו חלק בישראל, והזב משתלח רק ממחנה לזיה וממחנה שכינה, היינו כי מדות התאוה לא יאות לתלמידי חכמים, וטמא לנפש זה אינו משתלח רק ממחנה שכינה, כי גם בתלמידי חכמים נמצא לפעמים מדות העצבות כמ"ש בגמ' (תענית ד'). אוריתא הוא דמרתחי ליה ורותחא הוא עצבות, ורק ממחנה שכינה משתלח כי עוז וחדוה במקומו. (מי השילוח, חלק א, במדבר, נשא ד')

*“And you shall send out of the encampment all who are leprous, and all who suffer from an gonorrheal emission, and all who have come in contact with the dead.”* (Bamidbar 5:2) “Leprous” means anger, for the word for leprosy (*tsara’at*) contains the word “evil,” *ra’a*. (Gemara, *Arachin*, 15b). A “Zav” is a man who suffers from a gonorrheal emission, a man who entertains lusts. “One who comes in contact with the dead” is depression. The law requires that the leper is sent outside of all three encampments, because the attribute of anger has no place in all of Israel. The Zav was sent outside both the encampment of the Levites and the encampment of the *Shekhina*, for Torah Scholars, exemplified by the *Kohanim* and the Levites, may not be steeped in lust. “One who has come in contact with the dead” is only sent outside of the *Machaneh haShekhina* (*tent of God’s presence*) for Torah scholars also succumb at times to the attribute of sadness, as it is written in the Gemara (*Ta’anit*, 4a), “the Torah causes him to boil,” and this “boiling” is depression. Tainted by sadness, he is forbidden from entering into in the place of the *Shekhina* (The Tabernacle in the desert or the Temple in Jerusalem, and so too the place where you have the greatest feeling of God’s presence) because “strength and joy are in His place” (Divrei HaYamim 1, 16:27). (*Mei HaShiloach*, Volume I, Numbers, Nasso, 4)

The Ishbitzer Rebbe is trying to understand the seemingly cruel exclusion of people by viewing the conditions of these impure people as more than bodily conditions. They are conditions that reflect the emotional state of the person suffering from

them. Each condition symbolizes a trait that the Rabbis do not think belongs inside the camp of Israel.

This perspective raises its own thicket of questions, however. While these emotions are unpleasant emotions, they are also very human emotions. Is the Ishbitzer Rebbe really asking us to never feel anger, depression, etc.? I would like to offer another way to see this. As the word רע (evil) is in the word צרעת (leprosy), perhaps we should interpret *tzaraat* as evil stemming from anger. Anger can sometimes be a constructive emotion that leads us to stand up for what we know is right, but it can also become dangerous. The Ishbitzer Rebbe is warning us that we must make sure that our anger does not get to the point of evil, for that is when people must be kicked out of the camp.

But we are still left with the question of how God commands us to banish anger from our camp. Does not God Godself get angry? I would like to suggest that God is not commanding us to banish people who are angry, evil or depressed. Rather God is putting them in a bit of a “timeout” on the outskirts of the camp. Just temporarily, so they can recalibrate and join the camp as better versions of themselves. I am choosing to view this commandment as an act of love from God, a message from God that God wants us to be the best version of ourselves. A version of ourselves with mitigated anger and depression, and no evil. The version of ourselves that God intends us to be.



Chana Borow is originally from Cleveland, OH. Chana is a graduate of Ohio State University, where she earned a BA in History with a concentration in North American Jewish History. While there, she was an active member of campus life, serving as president of Buckeyes for Israel, and as the vice president of campus engagement for the Schottenstein Chabad House. She was also the recipient of the AJC Sharon Green Campus Advocacy Award. Chana has worked as a USY advisor for Congregation Tifereth Israel in Columbus, OH, staffed USY summer programs, was a madricha for the Drisha High School Summer Program and worked for OU-JLIC's Ascend summer program, as a madricha and teacher. Chana has just finished her Masters in Jewish Education from Hebrew College as a part of the Pardes Educators Program in Jerusalem. Chana has

loved her time learning at Pardes and cannot wait to continue her learning as a part of the Core Semikha program. Chana continues her connection with Pardes as an Engagement Associate. When Chana is not working or in school you can find her baking or walking in the park.