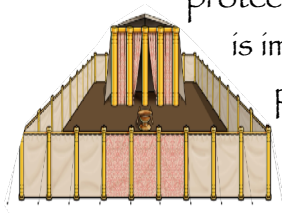


Nasso - "Lift Up"

נָשָׂא

This week's Parasha is titled Nasso, which means "to lift up." This Parasha will continue with the census for the tribe of Levi and will inform us of the duties of the sons of Gershon and Merari. One of the reasons the census was taken was for the purpose of having order in the labor of breaking down, transporting, and setting up the Tabernacle of Meeting. The sons of Levi were literally lifting up the house of the LORD when they transported the Tabernacle, and God's order needed to be followed. The Levitical guard also



protected the Sanctuary from defilement and sacrilege. It is important to remember that God cannot dwell in the presence of sin. The LORD was speaking through Moshe (Moses) to give them directions for the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the promised land of Yisra'el. One of their

assignments was to ensure that worshippers were in a state of purity before entering the Temple.

Consistent with that state of purity was a vow that a man or woman could make called the Nazarite vow. When a man or woman made this vow they separated themselves to the LORD for a period of time, so that they could be holy to the LORD. Aharon (Aaron) and his sons are given the priestly blessing in Numbers 6, otherwise known as the Aaronic blessing. This is a treasured blessing that was given to Aharon (Aaron) and his sons so that they could bless the children of Yisra'el daily.

Focus Passage: Numbers 6:1-27

Numbers 6 teaches the law of the

Nazarite. The Hebrew word for "Nazarite" is nazir (נזיר) meaning "to set apart." A person taking the Nazarite vow separated himself or herself to the LORD by taking this vow. They took this vow with the specific goal of devoting themselves to holiness. The Nazarite vow is seen throughout the Bible including the New Testament. Sha'ul (Paul) himself took the Nazarite vow at the direction of James (the brother of Yeshua), so that Sha'ul could demonstrate that he honored and obeyed the Torah. This is a personal vow that the individual would choose to make to the LORD for a specific period of time so he or she could be holy to the LORD. Now you will see as you study Scripture two types of Nazarites, one who took the vow for a specific period of time and one who took the Nazarite vow for life. If a man was a Nazarite for life he was born a Nazarite and his mother took the Nazarite vow while the baby was still in the womb. Samson is the perfect example of this. The LORD called Samson to be a Nazarite from the womb. Numbers 6 is establishing the law of a

Pray First

Father God,

Thank You that You are a God of order and that You show us through Your Word exactly how we should live. Father, help us to be a distinct people, set apart, so that when people look at us they may see our love for You.

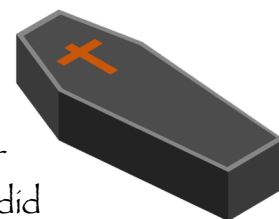
In Yeshua's name we pray,
Amen

Read next: Numbers 4:21-7:89

"All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the Lord."
- Numbers 6:8

Nazarite that is specifically for a period of time, and usually for a specific purpose. This is a time that was set apart for God so that they could be holy to Him. Numbers 6:2 states, "When either a man or woman consecrates and offers to take the vow of a Nazarite, he is to separate himself to the LORD."

Numbers 6:3-6 gives the main qualifications for being a Nazarite. Both male and female were to abide by these instructions. They were to abstain from strong drink. They could not drink wine or grape juice. In fact they could not consume grapes in any form. The significance of not eating the grapes is not directly explained, but just as grapes were not to be touched during a Sabbatical year so the Nazarites were not to touch the grapes during the time of their vow. The priest could not have strong drink while serving in the Sanctuary either, but they could drink wine when they were not in the Sanctuary. The Nazarite prohibitions far exceeded those of the priesthood. The Nazarite was not allowed to cut their hair during the time of their vow. The hair of the Nazarite signified the term of the vow. At minimum a Nazarite vow would last 30 days, but a person could take a Nazarite vow for as long as they liked. If the vow was for one year the Nazarite had one year's length of hair to offer in the Temple. Offering the hair to the LORD was like offering a span of one's own life to the LORD. The Nazarite was also prohibited from going near or touching a dead body. Numbers 6:9-12 teaches us that the Nazarite, whether

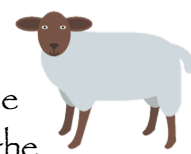


male or female, would be ritually unclean by coming near a corpse. If the Nazarite did come into contact with the corpse they needed to go through the process of a seven day purification. Numbers 6:10 -11 tells us that on the eighth day he would bring two turtle doves, or two young pigeons, to the kohen (priest) at the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting. The kohen would then offer one as a sin offering and one as a burnt offering and make atonement for the Nazarite, because he became unclean when coming into contact with the corpse. God did not say this about the dead because He did not have compassion on the man or woman who lost a loved one, He said this because death is part of sin, and death was never in God's plan. God cannot be in the presence of sin and the Nazarite was to be holy to the LORD. When the term of their vow was fulfilled

they would bring an offering to the doorway of the Tabernacle of Meeting. The Nazarite was to present the four main kinds of sacrifices to the kohen: a sin



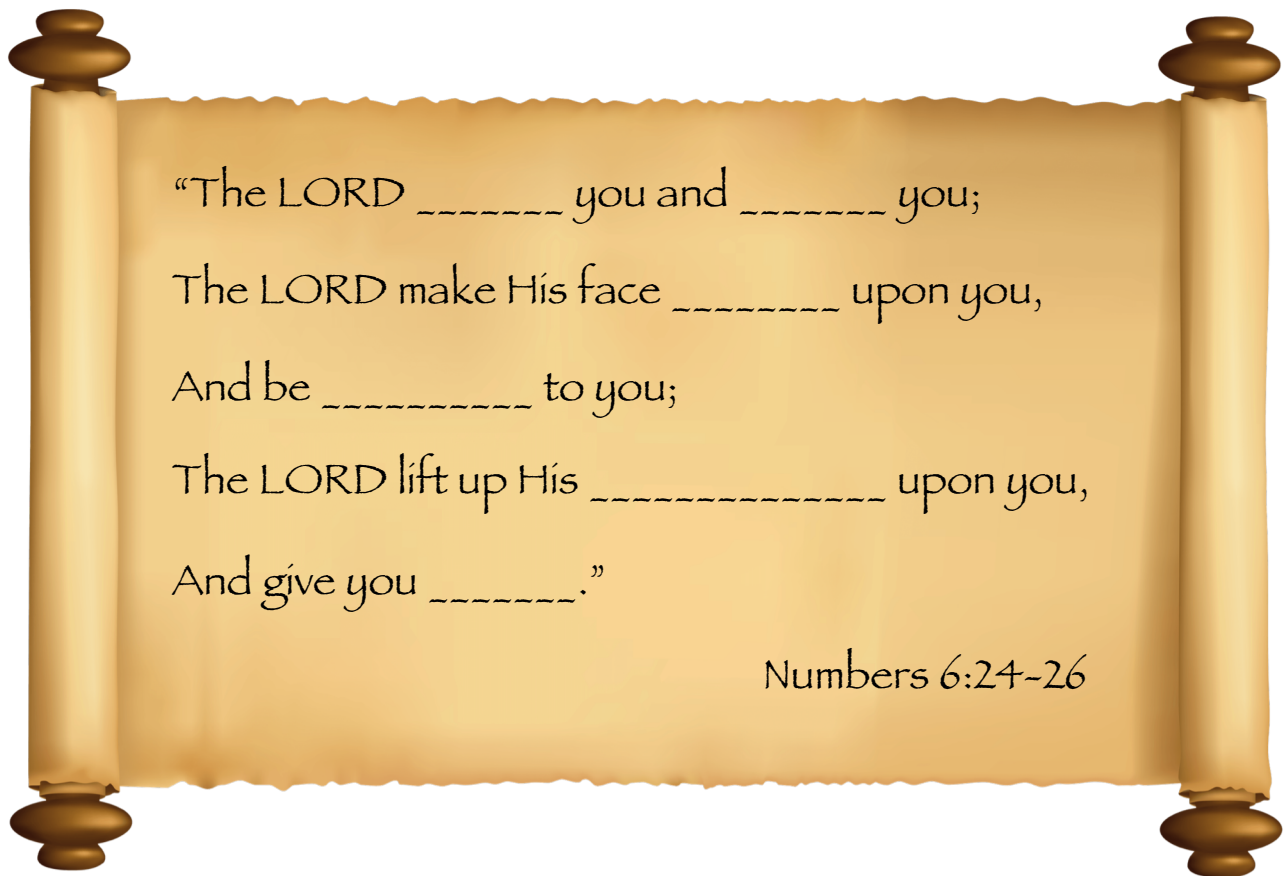
offering, a burnt offering, a grain offering, and a peace offering, along with a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their drink offerings. It would cost the Nazarite three lambs to end the vow, as a reminder of just how costly it is to set oneself apart for the LORD. The Nazarite was to then shave his head at the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting. The hair was then burned as a offering to God. Then the Nazarite may drink the wine, the vow was over.



The Nazarite vow cannot be kept today. Because we do not have a Temple, the vow can never be properly completed. Although we as believers in Messiah Yeshua cannot make a Nazarite vow to the LORD, we are still called to be holy and set apart for the LORD. 1 Peter 2:5 says that we "as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Messiah Yeshua." These passages show us that we are to be set apart of the LORD, seeking to obey Him, so that we may be holy to the LORD.

The Priestly Blessing

In Numbers 6:23–27 the LORD commanded Aharon and his sons to bless the children of Yisra'el with a priestly blessing, sometimes referred to as the Aaronic blessing. This blessing was spoken each day immediately following the sacrificial offering. One of the primary duties of the kohen was to bless Yisra'el but this blessing very clearly lets the audience know that the Kohanim are only instruments that God uses. They have no inherent power to bless or curse. The Kohanim could only remind the people of what God promises and what God does. When the Kohanim pronounce this blessing God steps in and offers His blessing.



This blessing is not for the entire world; this blessing is specifically for Yisra'el. Yisra'el is set apart and God calls them His people. We can be called His children just as Yisra'el is called His children, through faith in Messiah Yeshua. He died and paid the price of redemption through His blood shed on the cross. When we repent and turn from our sins and trust in Him, we will also be called His children.

Fill in the blanks in Aaron's priestly blessing from the word bank below.

bless peace shine
 gracious countenance keep

New Testament - Acts 21:17-26

Pray First

Father God,

We thank You for Your work of redemption that You gave us through Your Son Messiah Yeshua. Thank You that the gift of redemption is for both the Jew and the Gentile. Teach us today to see the truth of this passage of Scripture and give us a greater understanding of how to apply these truths to our lives.

In Yeshua's name we pray,
Amen

Read next : Acts 21:17-26

In our New Testament portion Sha'ul (Paul) had traveled to Jerusalem, and when he arrived he went to see James (the brother of Yeshua) the leader of the first church, and the elders. They greeted him warmly and with great joy. Sha'ul shared with them in great detail what God had done among the Gentile nations through his ministry. When they heard these things they glorified and praised the LORD. Acts 21:20 tells us that after they praised God they said, "You see brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law." Myriads literally means tens of thousands. This tells us that there were tens of thousands of believers in Jerusalem that believed in Messiah Yeshua, praising God for all He had done. Sha'ul's testimony also emphasizes that when we, as followers of Yeshua, are obedient to His rule in our life we will have reasons to praise Him. These believers recognized that they were hearing of God's redeeming power in the Gentile nations and they were praising God for His goodness. All believers in Yeshua, Jewish or Gentile, have the shared experience of salvation and can rejoice when another person comes to faith in Messiah Yeshua.

These same men and women who believed in Messiah Yeshua and rejoiced at all that Sha'ul shared were also zealous for the law. This is where Sha'ul had a problem. Slanderous things were being said about Sha'ul. People were saying that Sha'ul was teaching the Jewish people that came to believe in and follow Messiah Yeshua in these Gentile nations that they did not need to follow the laws of Moshe anymore. They thought that Sha'ul was teaching that they did not need to follow the Torah. Those who believed this rumor were believing that Sha'ul was teaching heresy, and they thought that he was a traitor by teaching Jews to abandon the law of Moshe. James and the elders knew this was not true and that these were false accusations. Sha'ul himself did not violate the Torah but continued to keep it after coming to trust in Yeshua for his salvation.

"And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law;" Acts 21:20

In Acts 21:22 -23, after telling Sha'ul what was being said about him, they said that the committee must meet, because they would have heard that he had come to Jerusalem. They also told him that they had a solution to this problem. The leadership was asking Sha'ul to be submissive to them and to follow their instructions. There were four men who had taken a Nazarite vow. This is the same Nazarite vow that we studied in our Torah portion. It was still common practice to take a Nazarite vow because the Temple was still standing. If you remember from



our Torah teaching, these vows were for a designated period of time. Those who took the vow were not to touch anything dead, refrain from any product of the grapevine, and they were not to cut their hair. At the period when their vow was completed they were to bring an offering to the LORD at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. The elders of the church wanted Sha'ul to purify himself with these men and pay the men's expenses. This was a great expense for Sha'ul and would demonstrate his great commitment to the law of Moshe. By Sha'ul following these instructions, purifying himself, and setting himself apart with the Nazarite vow, he would show those who believed the lies about him that he kept the Torah. It would be in contrast to what they had heard.



In Acts 21:25 we learn the solution for the Gentile believers had not changed from what was decided. If we go back to Acts 15: 19-20, we read that it was decided that the Gentiles should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. In Acts 21:26, Sha'ul took the men, and the next day having been purified with them, entered the Temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering was made for each of them. Sha'ul kept the Torah. Today the law cannot be enforced because there is no longer a Temple. Sha'ul could keep all of the commands because there was a Temple. We can however learn many things from studying all of the law, celebrating the feasts, and learning what each action meant that was done in the Temple.



Remember though as you study, you are as pleasing as you are going to be to God because of the suffering of Messiah Yeshua. It is the cleansing of Yeshua's blood that purifies us and makes us pleasing to God. It is not based on what you do, or do not do. Just as myriads of Jews believed in Yeshua and remained passionate for law of Moshe, so should the believer today, even though the letter of the law cannot be followed.

Without a Temple the Spirit of the law can and should be followed by the believer today. The Spirit of the law is love. First and foremost it is our love for God which teaches us to love others. We as believers in Messiah Yeshua are to study all of the Word of God. We are to ask God to show us how to understand and apply the law through His Holy Spirit. We should thank God for His Word and for giving us the Torah. Whether we are Jew or Gentile we should seek to obey God as Paul did, desiring to be set apart as holy unto the LORD, just as those who took the Nazarite vow desired to be set apart as holy. Just as the believers in the first church demonstrated, we should thank God and praise Him for all that He has done.

New Testament Quiz

Answer these questions based on Acts 21:17-26

1. What did Paul testify to, in detail, about James and the elders?
2. What was Paul being accused of?
3. Did Paul submit to the decision of the elders?
4. What three things were the Gentiles to observe?
5. How many men had taken a vow?
6. What city was Paul in when he testified to the elders and James?

Haftarah - Judges 13:2-25

In this Haftarah portion we read that the Angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah and his wife. Manoah's wife was barren and the Angel of the LORD told her that she would conceive a son. This son was chosen for a very specific purpose. God had chosen their son Shimshon (Samson) to be a Nazarite, not just for a specific period of time, but he was to be a Nazarite for life. In our Torah portion this week we learn that a Nazarite was someone who took a special vow to be devoted to holiness to the LORD, for a specific period of time. Shimshon (Samson) was chosen upon conception to be set apart as holy, and to serve the LORD all of his life.



In Judges 13:5 The Angel of the LORD told Manoah's wife not to drink wine or any similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. Nor would any razor come upon Shimshon's head, for the child would be a Nazarite to God, from the womb.



Shimshon would deliver Yisra'el out of the hands of the Philistines and everyone would know that he had taken a Nazarite vow. Manoah and his wife desired to raise Shimshon as the LORD commanded and obeyed all that the LORD had told them. In Judges 13:8, Manoah prayed to the LORD and asked Him to let the Man of God "whom You sent come again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born." This was extremely wise of Manoah. He recognized that raising children is not something that can be done without God's guidance. Parents should seek God daily in prayer, not only for the physical growth of their children, but also for the spiritual growth of their children. Deuteronomy 11:19 tells us to teach our children God's words, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Perhaps Manoah was remembering these commands when he learned he would be a father. Manoah wanted to talk to the Angel of God himself, and asked God for the Angel of the LORD to come again so that they could be taught what to do when the child was born.

God heard Manoah's request for guidance and the Angel of the LORD appeared to his wife once again. She ran and took her husband to the Angel of the LORD. Judges 13:12 says that Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "Let your words come to pass. What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?" Manoah understood that Shimshon was to be distinct and was to be set apart as holy to the LORD. Manoah needed to be instructed properly on what to do so Shimshon was distinct and set apart for the LORD. Manoah desired to thank the Angel of LORD. He asked the Angel of the LORD if he could prepare a young goat for him. The Angel of the LORD told him he would not eat his food but that Manoah should offer a burnt offering unto the LORD. Manoah then took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD.

In Judges 13:20 we read that as the flame of the burnt offering went up toward heaven from the altar the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame from the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw this

they fell on their faces to the ground. They realized they had been in the presence of God!



Manoah's wife bore a son just as the LORD said, and they called him Shimshon.

Judges 13:24 says that he grew and he was blessed. It is because of this blessing that Shimshon turned back to the LORD at the end of his life. When you continue to study Scripture you will see that Shimshon was not a perfect man. In fact, he did not always demonstrate godly living and he made some big mistakes. Just because he took a Nazarite vow and his parents dedicated him

from the womb to the LORD did not guarantee that he would not fail. Shimshon knew of God's unconditional love and he understood the commands of God because his parents obeyed God and taught him the ways of God. Shimshon understood the power of God's forgiveness and turned back to God when he failed and he laid his life down for the people of Yisra'el. We cannot take a Nazarite vow as Shimshon did because we do not have the Temple. We can however seek to follow God and obey His commands so that we can be holy to the LORD. We, like Shimshon, will fail because none of us are perfect. However we are only defeated when we fail to turn to God in repentance. It is through the repentance of our sins that we can be forgiven and restored to God.



Answers to New Testament Quiz

1. What did Paul testify to, in detail, about James and the elders?

About what God was doing among the Gentiles who believed in Messiah Yeshua

2. What was Paul being accused of?

Of telling the Jews they did not need to observe the law of Moses after accepting Messiah

3. Did Paul submit to the decision of the elders?

Yes

4. What four things were the Gentiles to observe?

keep from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled and from sexual immoality

5. How many men had taken a vow?

Four

6. What city was Paul in when he testified to the elders and James?

Jerusalem