

**Parasha Nasso (Elevate)  
May 26, 2007/9 Sivan 5767**

**Torah:** Numbers 4:21-7:89  
**Haftarah:** Judges 13:2-25  
**Brit Chadasha:** John 12:20-36

This is a portion about offerings to the Lord, both physical offerings of ourselves in terms of serving God and of living a life which is in obedience to Him – indeed, these are two central aspects of being a Believer.

The Torah portion begins in Numbers 4:21, with a census taken by Moses and Aaron of several clans, and describing each clan's duties. Chapter 5 deals with purity, restitution for wronging each other, and a test by which to see if a wife has been unfaithful. Chapter 6 describes the Nazirite vow – a Nazir was one (either a man or a woman) who chose to give up worldly pleasures, and dedicate himself or herself to following God and the study of Torah.

NU 6:1 The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the LORD as a Nazirite, <sup>3</sup> he must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or from other fermented drink. He must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. <sup>4</sup> As long as he is a Nazirite, he must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins.

NU 6:5 " 'During the entire period of his vow of separation no razor may be used on his head. He must be holy until the period of his separation to the LORD is over; he must let the hair of his head grow long. <sup>6</sup> Throughout the period of his separation to the LORD he must not go near a dead body.  
(NIV)

There are more rules described concerning contact with the dead elaborated upon, and what the Nazirite must do when his period of separation is over. Chapter 6 concludes with the Aaronic Benediction, something familiar to many of us as it concludes our weekly service.

Chapter 7, the final chapter in the portion, is a detailed list of the tribal leaders of Israel and the gifts that they brought to dedicate the Tabernacle, known as the Mishkan.

In the Haftarah, the wife of Manoah is barren, and an angel tells her that she will give birth to a son who will become a Nazirite, which is the connection to the Torah portion:

JDG 13:5 . . . you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazarite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines." (NIV)

She tells her husband, who is somewhat sceptical. The angel appears and tells him the same thing. The woman ends up giving birth to Samson:

JDG 13:24 The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the LORD blessed him (NIV)

The Brit Chadasha reading has Yeshua speaking to His disciples about serving the Father through Him. His death is foreshadowed:

JN 12:35 Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. (NIV)

The Nazirites made a choice. They willingly gave up the world just to serve the L-rd. Although most of us are not called to as extreme requirements as the Nazirites, we have a choice as well: to be set apart to G-d. Yeshua gave us the choice to walk with Him, instead of with the world. It seems like a simple choice, but has serious consequences. We change, inwardly and outwardly. When we make a commitment to put the L-rd first in our lives, our homes, our decisions, and our relationships, for many people, this is just too extreme. I am sure many of us have stories about people abandoning us over our choice to follow G-d. This is a sacrifice, often painful, but part of the price of being a Believer.

This is because many people do not understand the need for a relationship with G-d. They don't want rules and restrictions. But they also do not understand that offering themselves to G-d brings Freedom. As it is written in John 12:35, "the man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going." Yeshua is the light. I choose to be free.