

<b>Naso</b>	<b>Elevate</b>	<b>Organizing For the Move</b>
<b>Torah:</b>	Numbers 4:21-7:89	
<b>Haftarah:</b>	Zachariah 2:19(13) – 4:7	
<b>Brit Chadashah:</b>	Revelation 11:1-19	

Our passage today highlights four things. It deals first with the census of the ministry age Levites. It then mentions the removal of unclean people out of the camp as an introduction to how to deal with a jealous husband who accuses his wife of adultery. This is followed by a lengthy discussion of the various stipulations of the Nazarite vow. This section ends with a description of the various gifts which the twelve princes make.

This is another technical portion with more than enough material for three or four meditations, so I will have to be judicious on what I share for our discussion today.

The Levites who are of ministry age are counted and their tasks in transporting different portions are mentioned. The princes give them six chariot carts to transport all but the most sacred items. These had to be carried on the shoulders of Aaronites.

Because the presence of the Lord is coming into the camp, all of the unclean people are removed. They dwelt outside the camp, but their needs were still met.

Next the accusations of a suspicious husband are outlined when he suspects his wife of infidelity, without any witnesses to support his claim. The woman was brought before the priests and a series of jealousy offerings were prepared, similar to those which we made as part of a guilt offering. She is made to stand at the entrance of the holy place and watched as one of the priests took dust from the floor of the tabernacle and mixed it with water.

The priest places the offerings into her hands and holds the bitter waters as she swears an oath of innocence to the Lord. If she is innocent, then the water she is required to drink will have no negative impact on her. If she is guilty then her uterus will drop and her womb will discharge or swell. The text uses euphemisms to describe what is clearly beyond the power of any water to trigger.

Then the curse is written on a scroll and then stirred into the water until the curse dissolves. Before she drinks the water, the priest takes the jealousy offering out of her hands, waves it before the Lord and offers it on the big altar.

Once she drinks the bitter, cursed water, if she is innocent neither her uterus or her womb are negatively impacted. If she is guilty, then she is considered a curse and is likely made to live outside the camp with the unclean outcasts. If she is innocent, then her reproductive ability is not damaged and she will be able to have children. If she is found guilty, then her husband is declared free of sin in the whole affair. If she is innocent then her husband bears the shame of having made a false accusation and would likely not live it down.

When I used a Talmudic commentary, I found three strange assertions which the text does not support. Be careful not to take the words of any commentary over the words of the Scriptures. It says first that the guilty woman dies as part of the curse. It also wrongly asserts that she is

being cursed for having been alone with a man other than her husband and flirting with him, without any actual adultery happening. And, strangely, it says that if the husband is also guilty, the bitter waters will have no negative impact on the woman.

The punishment of the husband who is making a false accusation does not have to be specified because of the shame and embarrassment he would experience in the eyes of the whole camp. It is the guilt of the wife which is dealt with and not the guilt of the husband. He is only potentially guilty of gross defamation of an innocent women. This would discourage any man from making any accusation just because he is suspicious and has no real reason to doubt his wife.

Next, our portion deals with the nazarite vow. The Hebrew word means both to separate from others and also to impose abstentions on your self. It was done in order to spend quality alone time with YHVH in an unspecified location, likely outside the noisy, boisterous camp.

During this time, no alcohol is consumed, nor any foods which may possibly contain traces of alcohol. The Nazarite is not allow to defile themselves by mourning. If they unwittingly become defiled (perhaps by not choosing a sufficiently isolated spot), they have to shave their head and make an atonement offering. Any time previously served no longer counts and the process has to start over again.

Once the unspecified time in completed, they are taken to the entrance of the tent of meeting and a series of special offerings are made. Then they shave their hair and offer it on the altar. The priests take a portion of the special offerings, wave it before the L-RD and it is considered theirs. Afterwards, the person is allowed to consume wine.

As part of the discussion of coming apart to be with the L-RD, the words of the Aaronic benediction are given. These words were probably first recited over someone who had completed their nazarite time, but they were also for the entire people, probably upon completion offerings they had brought before the L-RD.

Once the camp was organized and the tabernacle was set up and sanctified, take down and transportation protocols are given. Some of that which was packed up was to be transported by special chariots, drawn by special oxen. These were given by the princes and then basic worship supplies were also given over a 12 day period. The order in which these were given was also the marching marching order of the four banners.

In total, twelve plates, twelve basins and twelve goblets were were given and each contained materials needed in worship. Twelve bulls, twelve rams, twelve lambs and twelve goats were given, for both the burnt offering and the atonement offering. 24 cattle, 60 rams, 60 goats and 60 lambs were given as Thanksgiving offerings.

The passage ends with a mention that just as the people could hear YHVH talking to Moses and Moses talking with YHVH, while the Presence hovered over Moses tent, they were also able to hear both YHVH and Moses talking when he went into tent and behind the veil. The change of venue did not affect Moses' access to the Presence. Any questions which the people had when they could no longer ask Moses were dealt with by the High Priest and his yes (urim) and no (thummim) stones.

**First Summer Series: Feed My Sheep**

**Passage: “After they had eaten, Yeshua said to Simon Peter; Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me more than you love these here?” To which he replied: “Yes L-rd, You know that I love You.” Yeshua said to him: “Feed My sheep.” He said to him for a second time:” Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?”. Peter answered to Him: “Yes, L-rd, You know that I love You”. Yeshua said to him: “Feed my Sheep.” He said to him for the third time: “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?”. Peter was saddened that He asked him for the third time:”Do you love Me?” And he said to Him:” L-rd, You know all things, You know that I love You.” Yeshua said to him: “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:15-17)**

Fresh from the joy and the wonder of the resurrection, and the great consolation of spending time with risen Messiah, Peter has a very disturbing conversation with Yeshua. It was not even a private exchange. Much of the content of John's Gospel are private, personal conversations and private declarations not contained in the three other (synoptic) Gospels. It is a very personal Gospel.

It is more of an essay than the first three and it highlights seven miracles which Messiah performed and seven declarations of His divinity He made, using the Greek equivalent of the sacred name: YHVH (***ego eimi*** I AM). It is considered to be a literary masterpiece even by those who are not believers.

Our passage records one of the last conversations our Messiah had with the apostle Peter. After this, most of the rest of the time Messiah spent on earth after He rose from the dead, and before His ascension, was spent visiting all the other believers He had not yet seen. He did this in order to give them personal proof that He was indeed alive. His conversations with each of them would have also both been personal and prophetic. Just after the first part of the conversation we are dealing with, Yeshua also foretold the manner of Peter's martyrdom.

On his resurrected conversation with other believers, He would have both referred back to passages in the Tanakh (Torah, Prophets and Psalms) which spoke about Him, and ahead to the coming of the Holy Spirit and to Messiah's eventual return. I would have liked to have been a fly on the wall and listen in, but what He said would have had few surprises. All that which He taught was squarely based on the Scriptures. He also gave people personal details and John shares some of them which Peter got. It would have been an amazing and touching encounter between Him and His mother Mary. Probably lots of tears and laughter.

As we get into the content of the passage, and what it actually says, let me clear up some theological nonsense. Just before Peter's triple denial, Yeshua said that the enemy would put him through the ringer, but after his recovery (victory) he, Peter, should strengthen the others (Luke 22:31, 32).

Yeshua's intimate conversation with Peter is recorded in Koine (common) Greek and some people use the various words for love in Classical Greek to try and make a point which our passage does not. First of all, Koine Greek uses two of the Greek words for love interchangeably. In the New Testament there is no distinction in meaning between Agape love and phileo love. They both can be used to describe both the love of G-d and brotherly love. It is only in Classical Greek that a distinction in meaning is made.

Koine Greek is a loose dialect of Greek and does not make all the fine distinctions which are found in Classical Greek. Classical Greek only appears four times in the New Testament. When people used Koine Greek in a letter, it was the custom to use Classical Greek in the first

paragraph of that letter. This occurs at the beginnings of Luke, John, Acts and Hebrews. The rest of these epistles are written in Koine Greek and many of the rules of Classical Greek do not apply.

Some say that Yeshua asked Peter if he loved him, using the word: "Agape" three times. They claim that for the first two times, Peter answered using the word: "Phileo". In Classical Greek, "Agape" expresses the highest form of love and may be used to describe the love of G-d. Many modern churches and commentators use this word, "Agape" to refer to the love of G-d.

In Classical Greek, the word: "Phileo" is used to describe a lower level of love, brotherly love. We get the word philanthropy from this Greek word. This distinction does not exist in Koine Greek and the two words for love are used interchangeably. My five seminary Greek classes came in handy while I was preparing this message and I checked the passage with my Greek Bible. Yeshua asks Peter twice if he loved Him, using the word Agape, but the third and final time Yeshua uses the word Phileo. Peter uses the word: "Phileo" in each of his three replies. So there was no attempt to get Peter to use the supposedly higher word which supposedly referred to the love of G-d.

I am not going to argue whether the original exchange occurred in Aramaic and was later translated into Koine Greek. First of all, we have no manuscripts of John in either Hebrew or Aramaic which predate our Koine Greek copies. At that time, most Jews spoke both Koine Greek and Aramaic, with a sprinkling of Hebrew words here and there. Linguists call this mixture of different languages a "Creole" The same linguist phenomenon occurs in our home, where we speak a mixture of English and French, with bits of Hebrew, Cree and Yiddish German thrown in.

At that time, Koine Greek was the most widely spoken language among the Jews. The use of Aramaic was declining and Hebrew was considered to be mainly a language of prayer to be used in Synagogue and not in personal conversation. Hebrew did not again become a spoken language among the Jews until modern times when it was revived in Israel. And even now, strange and wonderful dialects are developing in Israel and the Hebrew spoken among the troops of the IDF is even hard for regular Hebrew speakers to understand.

Even when Jews spoke Greek among themselves, they used many Hebrew or Aramaic sentence structures with a very loose, but specialized vocabulary which did not retain many of the careful distinctions found in Classical Greek. Koine Greek has a lot in common with the Brooklyn English which New York Jews speak among themselves and which is full of Yiddishisms (words that have crept into English from Yiddish but which are in common use like putz).

So it is not unlikely that this exchange between the Messiah and Peter, which John reports, occurred in Koine Greek. Koine Greek was considered one of Judaism's sacred languages and Jews spoke it for nearly a thousand years until it was no longer an international language in common use.

So, why does Yeshua ask Peter three times if he loved Him? Luke records Yeshua warning Peter that he is about to be attacked (and overcome) by the adversary and right after this is said, the Messiah is arrested and Peter denies Him three times in a row. Asking Peter to declare

that he loved the Messiah three times was a way to remove the shame and the pain of that horrible experience of triple denial. Nothing less and nothing more.

Let me just say here that even though we know that we love the Messiah, we need to be aware that even when we blow it and say or do stupid things which violate the Word and are functional denials of the L-rd, He still loves us. He wants us to repent and return to Him and then use our recovery from defeat to help others who may have fallen into the same problem. Failure does not mean that our walk with the L-rd has come to an end. Failure and defeat also do not mean that the Messiah has ceased loving us.

So instead of wallowing in failure and being crushed by remorse and guilt, let the L-rd bring us back to the place from which we have fallen and use our pain and shame to help others and to teach them how to overcome when they are confronted by that which once defeated us. The enemy of our souls has a three pronged attack when he is trying to wound us or destroy our faith. First he tempts, then he hits us with guilt and if that does not work, he confuses us, just so he can chain us to the flesh, the world or to himself and separate us from the Messiah.

Paul said that nothing can really separate us from the L-rd as long as we walk with Him according to His Word. When we slip or fall, instead of being consumed with useless remorse, we need to learn come back from any departures from His truth where we have let the works of the flesh demolish our walk with the King. He wants us to set straight paths for our wounded feet and we need to let our Saviour repair anything in our souls which has been broken by any number of attacks.

Instead of letting defeat continue to defeat us, we need to get back up every time we fall and reach out to both the Messiah and to other believers who may have gone through the same things. The Proverbs say that though the righteous fall seven times, they get back up (Prov. 24:16) And Yeshua says we are to forgive seven times seventy times a day (Luke 17:4). If we are to forgive each other this much, why do we think that G-d will not do the same?

We are all His sheep and when we recover from a wound, we need to reach out to other sheep and help them also find the healing we have experienced. Feeding the sheep not only means helping each other to grow in our grasp of the Word as we learn to react biblically to every situation we encounter. It also means reaching out to wounded and fallen believers to help them to get back on their feet. This doesn't mean we should run after them and plead for them to come to their senses. This only makes them run away or crawl away faster.

We need to continue to show compassion and even sympathy so that they know they are welcome back into our lives, when they have finished feeding the pigs as they roll around in the mud of this fading world.

Life may hit us with any number of powerful, heartbreaking storms and we may get knocked down off our feet any number of times. This happened to David repeatedly, but the protection and the provision of G-d and His healing restoration kept David peacefully walking through those valleys of the shadow of death. It is not the boxer who hits the hardest who wins the fight, it is the one who keeps getting up until his opponent is the one lying on the mat.

Are you lying on the mat, waiting to be counted out or do you keep getting up, no matter how many times you are knocked down? Knocked down doesn't mean knocked out, until you stop getting back up. Peter got knocked down three times and when Yeshua looked at him, he had

a good cry, but he got back up and is now being told by the Messiah to help others to get back up when they are also knocked down.

This is not so much an invitation to fall into sin as it is a declaration that no matter how many times you fall and no matter how deeply you slip into sin, the L-rd will never abandon you, as long as you still want to be found. Our calling is to be fighters who not only learn to fight by the rules, but who also pick up others when they fall. We should just dust them off, give them a hug and send back into the fight.

Our Messiah is a good trainer because He never fell and He was never knocked down, AND He was never knocked out. We have both a built in homing mechanism and an emergency call button to press when we fall down and can't get up. The Word of our Messiah is able to both chase us down and round us up so that none of us need to fall away and return to that which we have vomited (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

I heard a song once which told me the only thing the L-rd will say, when we repent and eventually come back to Him – He will say that we should have come sooner. He does not easily give up on us and that is one of the reasons that He has not smitten Sabbath breaking, replacement theology fools. They are still in the wrong, but He will never stop calling them back to the truth, as He shows them His love and compassion.

In Corinthians, Paul warned us to be careful when we think we stand that we do not fall. (1 Cor. 10:12). Condemnation is not a good teacher and is certainly not a good motivator. When the L-rd asks us if we love Him, we had better learn to feed His sheep. He will always offer us a way to break free from sin and return to Him. His Word does not only teach us the truth, it also teaches us how to return to the straight and narrow whenever we fall.

Our people wandered in the wilderness because they refused to obey the call which was given to them while they were still in Egypt. Two of the spies who wanted to obey, wandered with them in the wilderness and taught their kids not to follow in the dark footsteps of disobedience like their parents did. Then they were able to enter the land.

I do believe there is a point of no return. Look at Judas. He could have come back and been forgiven, but he let his carnal remorse crush him until he took his own life. He had seen all the miracles of the L-rd and heard the Messiah as He expounded on the changeless Word of G-d, but when he betrayed the L-rd, he listened to the guilt which the enemy was shouting at him. The enemy also shouted guilt at Peter during and after his triple denial, but Peter didn't listen and sought the L-rd. He is now being told to help others follow suit.

We need to feed the sheep. We need to equip the sheep. As sheep, we also need to be fed and equipped. Your life may crumble into a million little pieces, repeatedly, but the L-rd stands ready to help you put it all back together as many times as it takes. This happens when we respond to His love and don't give in to shame and guilt. Peter was a hot headed loud mouth, but he learned to overcome his shortcomings and walk with the Messiah. Are you ready to follow suit, my beloved hot headed loud mouths?

Shabbat shalom and Shavua tov.