

Naso

נשא

“Take”

Numbers 4:21 – 7:89

Torah Together



This portion covers several interesting subjects. In addition to the test for an unfaithful wife, the details of the voluntary Nazirite vow are explained. Finally, God instructs Moses to tell Aaron how he is to bless the Israelites with the priestly blessing.

1. The Gershonites and the Merarites - 4:21-33

a) In taking the census of the Gershonites, who exactly was counted? Why just these? What were their duties? Who directed their work?

b) In taking the census of the Merarites, who exactly was counted? Why just these? What were their duties? Who directed their work?

2. The Numbering of the Levite Clans - 4:34-49

How many from each clan of the Levites were counted? What was the total? Why was this number different than the total given in **Numbers 3:39**?

The previous portion concluded by describing in detail the tasks of the Kohathites. We begin this portion by describing the tasks of the other two Levite clans, the Gershonites and the Merarites. God is very thorough in detailing the responsibilities of the Levites.

Scripture Link:

Numbers 8:24-26

explains that a Levite was in service at the Tabernacle from the age of 30 through the age of 50. He began an apprentice program at age 25 and after age 50, he was able to help others but he was to do no work.

Scripture Link:

Leviticus deals at length about the concept of purity. **Chapter 13** specifically deals with infectious skin diseases. In addition to reinforcing God's requirement for spiritual purity, this command would have the blessing of disease prevention.

Scripture Link:

Leviticus 5:17 – 6:7 contain the details of the guilt offering, the offering required by God to deal with sin involving harm to others. Note that the *Torah* clearly states that with such sin, not only must restitution be made to the offended party, but atonement must also be made because the sinner has been "unfaithful to YHWH."

An Unfaithful Wife?

In this culture, women were often treated just slightly better than slaves. It was possible for a husband to accuse his wife of unfaithfulness without proof, perhaps out of pure jealousy. This law would have kept a faithful wife (who was accused unjustly) from being treated harshly by her husband. Whether guilty or innocent, God would be intimately involved in the life of the wife, providing cursing or blessing as appropriate.

3. The Purity of the Camp and Restitution for Wrongs - 5:1-10

a) What could cause a person to be sent away from the camp? According to verse 3, why was this done? Was the banishment permanent? For what reasons do you think God might have commanded this?

b) For what reasons might a person need to make restitution? According to verse 6, what else happens when someone wrongs another person? What must be done to make restitution? What happened if there was no one to whom to make restitution?

4. The Test for an Unfaithful Wife - 5:11-31

a) Describe the situation that would lead to the test for an unfaithful wife. Was proof of unfaithfulness necessary? What situation might arise in the absence of this test?

b) Describe the test itself. What was the punishment if the wife was guilty? Who actually carried out this punishment? Do you think this was fair?

c) Do you think this test was of greater benefit for the husband or the wife? Does this give you any insight into God's character?

5. The Nazirite - 6:1-21

a) The 'Nazirite' voluntarily took a vow before God. Who could take such a vow? For what reasons might someone want to do such a thing?

b) Typically, the period of a Nazirite vow was 30 days. During this time, what were the responsibilities of the person? What could happen to interrupt this process? What was done in this case?

c) What process was followed when the period of separation was completed? Do you know of any other references to Nazirites in the Bible?

6. The Priestly Blessing - 6:22-27

a) Specifically to whom were these instructions given? According to verse 27, what is the effect when these instructions are followed?

b) Analyze the words to be spoken. Do you find any significance in the fact that these words are given by God to be used specifically for this purpose?

May the LORD bless you and keep you,
May the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you,
May the LORD lift his countenance upon you and give you peace.
Numbers 6:24 - 26

What is a Nazirite?

The term Nazirite means 'dedicated one' or 'set apart one.' A person undertakes such a vow to show that he or she is voluntarily separating himself or herself for use by God. In the *Brit Hadashah*, when *Yeshua* is referred to as "Jesus of Nazareth," the original author may have meant to indicate either that *Yeshua* was from the town of Nazareth or that *Yeshua* had taken a Nazirite vow, separating himself for use by God. Either translation is possible from the Hebrew.

Scripture Links:

Judges chapters 13 – 16 tell the story of Samson. In particular, **Judges 13:7** show that God intended for Samson to be "a Nazirite of God from birth until the day of his death." Also, **I Samuel 1:11** indicate that Samuel too was a Nazirite from birth.

Scripture Link:

The Priestly Blessing spoken in **Numbers 6:24-26** shows that it is God's desire to bless His people with His protection, presence and peace. **Psalms 67** continues this theme, showing that God desires to bless **all** the peoples of the earth in the same way.

7. Offerings at the Dedication of the Tabernacle - 7:1-89

a) This passage, **Exodus 40**, and **Leviticus 8** each describe the same event. What additional information are we given in this passage?

b) According to verse 3, what gifts did the heads of the families who were the tribal leaders bring? To whom were these gifts given and how were they allocated? For what were they to be used? Who directed the usage of these gifts?

c) After the altar was anointed (vs 10), each tribal leader brought his offering for dedication. Exactly what offerings were brought by each tribal leader? Do you find any significance in these offerings?

d) A different tribal leader brought their offering on each day. In what order were the tribes presented? Why do you think the text lists each tribe's offerings separately?

e) Compare verse 89 with **Exodus 40:34-35**. Do these seem contradictory to you? How do you resolve this?

Scripture Links:
Numbers 7, **Exodus 40**, and **Leviticus 8** each describe the same event. As a general rule, when the *Torah* speaks of a single topic more than once, we should pay close attention – God must think it is important. (Consider the Gospels which present four different views of the life of the Messiah.) Can you gain any further insight by looking at all three of these passages together?

Digging deeper

1. Read **John 8:1-11**. Compare this story with the “Test for an Unfaithful Wife” in **Numbers 5:11-31**. Why do you think *Yeshua* was writing on the ground? What do you think he might have been writing? What character traits of God did *Yeshua* demonstrate by his actions?

2. Reread **Exodus 32:15–29**. What connections can you find between this story and the “Test for an Unfaithful Wife” in **Numbers 5:11-31**? Does this give you any insight into God’s view of idolatry?

Unfaithfulness

Additional insight into God’s character can be gained by considering His feelings about unfaithfulness. Certainly, God considers unfaithfulness to the marriage vow to be of paramount importance. (Think of the simplicity and directness of the seventh commandment: “Thou shall not commit adultery.”) The fact that God considers our unfaithfulness to Him through idolatry to be the same as the sin of adultery helps us understand the importance He places on the vows we make, whether to our mate or to Him.

3. Read **Acts 18:18 and 21:17 - 26**. The four men mentioned in verse 23 had taken a Nazirite vow. Why do you think it was necessary that they undergo the rite of purification? Why was it suggested that Paul join these men in their vow? What did Paul do?

Food for Thought

As can be seen from this story in **Acts**, the practice of making a vow of separation to YHWH in the manner described in **Numbers 6** had been kept alive in Hebrew society for hundreds of years at the time of *Yeshua*. Do you think you might be interested in making a similar vow of separation to God? If so, how might you go about it today?

For further study, see
Haftarah : Judges 13:2-25
Brit Hadashah : John 7:53-8:11; Acts 21:17-32