

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NUMBERS
"Nazarites: Dedicated Laymen"
Numbers 6:1-21

UP TO NOW

1. God has made the camp order. Every warrior is set in his proper position (chaps. 1, 2).
2. All the workmen are set in their proper places (chap. 3, 4). The whole congregation has been instructed on cleanliness and have done it (chap. 5).
3. Now provision is made for the highest character of separation to God (6:1-21). Here is a sample of O.T. dedication to God. Can the N.T. expect any less?!

ANALYSIS OF TEXT

1. VOW TAKEN v. 1

a. Who?

The text is clear that anyone among the "children of Israel" qualifies. There is no sex discrimination for a "man or woman" may do it.

b. What?

There is an election (free will) to vow a vow of separation. They are to be called "Nazarites." This term comes from a root meaning "set apart." The word sometimes means "prince" (Gen. 49:26; Deut. 33:16; Lam. 4:7) and twice "unpruned vine" (Lev. 25:5, 11). These homonyms suggest that a Nazarite was a lay "prince." The fruit of the unpruned vine was not gathered in the seventh year as a sign of that year's dedication to the Lord.

c. Why?

The issue at hand is separation to the LORD. Note the intimate personal Name of God. Not as a Creator, but as Saviour and Friend. The tetragrammaton must not be overlooked.

2. VOW EXPLAINED vv. 3-8

a. Negatively

1) No vinous produce v. 3, 4. Some of the five items mentioned might be construed to be harmful and others harmless. Whatever, there is to be total abstinence of anything which might compromise a separation vow.

2) No razor v. 5. This may connote a separation from uncleanness (Lev. 14:8, 9) and also a matter of self repudiation (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1-15).

3) No dead body vv. 6, 7. While no dead body is to contaminate the Nazarite, this also applied to family relationships. Therefore, devotion to God was

to preempt any natural affections.

b. Positively

A variety of phrases are used to show the separation had real significance. Look it was "unto the Lord" (vv. 5, 6) "he shall be holy" (vv. 5, 8), "the consecration of his God" (v. 7). The dominant principle here is the Lord.

NOTE: Many would ignore the impact of this revelation as being practical for the present day believer. This must not be allowed. Here is no legalism or asceticism. This is no vain fleeing from the world. It is rather a willing heart in devotion to the Lord yielding itself with pleasure to God.

3. VOW VIOLATED vv. 9-12

Here is a problem which overcomes a Nazarite unexpectedly. Ordinary laymen were expelled from the camp because of a dead body (5:2, 3). Even more drastic effects came to a Nazarite who was considered the quintessence of sanctity (vv. 9-12).

b. The cure

The ritual which is outlined is clear: head shaven (v. 9) and offerings (vv. 10-12). There is an emphasis on the severity of pollution in a dedicated life.

c. The consequences

This is almost unbelievable, but true. Accidental defilement vitiated the whole of the previous observance (v. 12). The whole vow would have to be started over again. There is no thought of "playing" here! Dedication had meaning--real meaning!

4. VOW COMPLETED vv. 13-20

a. Appearance v. 13

At the completion of the vow, which had time limitations, the Nazarite went to the tabernacle door. There is nothing hidden or furtive about this vow.

b. Offerings vv. 14-20

Four offerings are mentioned: burnt, meal (cereal), peace, and sin. Usually the offerer enjoyed a share of the peace offering (Lev. 7:11-21), but here the priest gets a special donation (v. 19). The wave offering (side to side motion) and the heave offering (up and down motion) and the drink offering (vv. 15, 17) were part of the ritual (cf. Num. 15). Note that there is no substitute for the lamb (cf. Lev. 1:14-17; 5:7-10). Three lambs are mandatory. What a reminder of the cost and sanctity of the Nazarite vow (14).

c. Shaving vv. 18, 19

The head of separation must be shorn. This integrated the Nazarite into the ranks of the ordinary people

Concl.: Some Nazarite vows included extras (v. 21).