



The Nazirite Vow

Numbers 6:1-21

February 3, 2018

Notes

Is the Nazirite Vow in the New Testament?

Paul is saved approximately A.D. 35.

Apostles decide Gentiles do not need to keep Torah as Jews do.

Acts 15:19-21 (NKJV) – ¹⁹ Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, ²⁰ but that we write to them to abstain **from things polluted by idols**, *from **sexual immorality***, *from things **strangled***, and *from **blood***. ²¹ For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

(Likely A.D. 48)

Acts 15:23, 28-29

²³ They wrote this **letter** by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. ²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

²⁹ that you abstain from **things offered to idols**, from **blood**, from things **strangled**, and from **sexual immorality**. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. (Likely A.D. 48)

Same Apostles compel Paul to publicly demonstrate Torah commitment. (Likely A.D. 57)

Acts 21:15-25 (NKJV) (Likely A.D. 57)

¹⁵ And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁶ Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.

¹⁷ And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. ¹⁸ On the following *day* Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ When he had greeted them, he told in

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detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ 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; ²¹ but **they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs.** ²² What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. ²³ Therefore do what we tell you: We have **four men who have taken a vow.** ²⁴ Take them and be purified with them, and **pay their expenses** so that they may **shave their heads**, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. ²⁵ But concerning the **Gentiles** who believe, we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.”

While Paul does not see any justification by the Law, he is committed to the Law enough to brag on it many years later

Philippians 3:6 – “concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” (Likely A.D. 61)

Acts 18:18 (NKJV) – He had *his* hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a **vow**. (Likely A.D. 51)

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Numbers 6:1-21 (NKJV)

The Requirements of the Nazirite Vow – A Time of Consecration

¹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When either a man or woman **consecrates** an offering to take the **vow** of a **Nazirite**, to separate himself to the LORD, ³ he shall separate himself from **wine** and *similar drink*; he shall drink neither **vinegar** made from wine nor vinegar made from *similar drink*; neither shall he drink any **grape juice**, nor eat **fresh grapes** or **raisins**. ⁴ All the days of his separation he shall **eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin.**

⁵ ‘All the days of the vow of his **separation** no razor shall come upon his **head**; until the days are fulfilled for which he **separated** himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. *Then* he shall **let the locks of the hair** of his **head grow**. ⁶ All the days that he **separates** himself to

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the LORD he shall not go near a dead body. ⁷ He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. ⁸ All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD.

Restarting, after Failure to Complete the Vow – Time is Lost

⁹ 'And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it. ¹⁰ Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting; ¹¹ and the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned in regard to the corpse; and he shall sanctify his head that same day. ¹² He shall consecrate to the LORD the days of his separation, and bring a male lamb in its first year as a trespass offering; but the former days shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.

Successfully Completing the Vow – Completed Time

¹³ 'Now this is the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. ¹⁴ And he shall present his offering to the LORD: one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as a peace offering, ¹⁵ a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings.

¹⁶ 'Then the priest shall bring them before the LORD and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering; ¹⁷ and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering. ¹⁸ Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.

¹⁹ 'And the priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram, one unleavened cake from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and put them upon the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his consecrated hair, ²⁰ and the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the LORD; they are holy for the priest, together with the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering. After that the Nazirite may drink wine.'

²¹ “This is the law of the **Nazirite** who vows to the LORD the offering for his separation, and besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide; according to the vow which he takes, so he must do according to the law of his separation.”

I. Purpose of the Nazirite Vow.

- **Hebrew noun** (נָזִיר, naw·zeer) means consecrated or devoted or separated. (Word appears in Num. 6:2, 13, 18, 19, 20, 21)
- **Primarily: sanctification.** Related verb “separate” / “separation”: (Num. 6:2, 3, 4, 5 [twice], 6, 7, 8, 12 [twice], 13 & 21 [twice]. Same word is translated consecrate (Num. 6:2, 9, 12, 18 [twice] & 19). Also the word for crown.
- **Also: express thanks, recovery from illness, birth of a child...**

II. Requirements of the Vow (6:1-8).

1. Nothing from the **grape**. Num. 6:3-4.

(3 staples: grain, wine & oil; Num. 18:12 & Deu. 28:51)
There’s debate in the Talmud about figs being included
(*Jerusalem Talmud, Nazir 2.1*)

2. No contact with a **dead** body. Num. 6:6.

3. No **cutting** of the **hair**. Num. 6:5.

The “**head**” is significant – Num. 6:5, 7, 9, 11 & 18.

- Nazirite was always recognizable by his hair.
- Hair grows throughout entire life and even a little beyond.
Ancients considered it the seat of a man’s vitality.

Samson’s 3 failures:

- Samson violated the **dead** with the **lion** (Judges 14:6) – as well with his many battles with Philistines (14:19 and 15:8 & 15). The lion scene is unique because he scoops the honey out of the carcass with his hand.
- Samson violated **wine** at **wedding party** (Judges 14:9)
- Samson violated the **hair** with **Delilah** (Judges 16:19)

III. Two Kinds of Nazirites (Lifelong and Temporary).

1. **Lifelong Nazirites:**

- **Resembles the prophets** (destined for role before birth, Jer. 1:5)
- Only 3 lifelong Nazirites in Bible (all had barren mothers).
 - **Manoah & Samson**, Judg. 13:2-7 & 13; mother’s vow

- **Hannah & Samuel**, 1 Sam. 1:11; angel of Lord directs mother, not father
- **Elizabeth & John the Baptist**, Luke 1:13-15.

It was Jesus Himself Who Called Samson to the Nazirite Vow.

Judges 13:17-18 (NKJV) – ¹⁷ Then Manoah said to the **Angel of the LORD**, “What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?”

¹⁸ And the Angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?” Wonderful: פִּלְעִי (pil·ee, adj)

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NKJV) –

⁶ For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called

Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Wonderful: פֶּה־לֵה (peh·leh, noun)
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of *His* government and peace
There will be no end.

2. Temporary Nazirites

- **Minimum time of 30 days** (Mishnah Nazir. 1:3). Could be **many years** (*Jerusalem Talmud*, Nazir 1:3; 3:4; 3:6).
- **Difference** between lifelong & temporary Nazirite is in periodic lightening of the hair’s weight.
- **Resembles priests** (both “holy to the LORD”; Lev. 21:6, Num. 6:8).

IV. Nazirite Vows Were Widespread.

- **Slaves** can participate. (*Jerusalem Talmud*, Nazir 9:1)
- **Women** participate (Num. 6:2), but fathers / husbands can overrule a vow on the day he hears of it (Num. 30:5, 8).
- Women in the Diaspora can make the vow but the concluding sacrifices are only offered in Eretz Israel. (*Mishnah Nazir* 3:6; 5:4).
Gentiles are not subject to the Nazirite Vow. (*Jerusalem Talmud*, Nazir 9:1). Yet, Josephus writes about Bernice (daughter of Agrippa I) participating in a Nazirite Vow. (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.313-314)

V. The Nazirite Approximates the Sanctity of High Priest.

- Like High Priest, Nazirite could not contaminate himself for the **dead of his own family**. Regular Priest could contaminate himself for his dead parents, (Lev 21:11, Num. 6:7).

- Like High Priest, **consecration** is on the **head** (Exo. 29:7 oil poured on head, **golden plate** on priest's head says, "Holiness to the Lord," Exo. 28:36-38; Num. 6:11)
- High Priest and all priests had no **alcohol** while serving in the Tabernacle (Lev. 10:9); Nazirite had no alcohol during the vow.

VI. Failure to Complete the Vow (6:9-12).

If someone dies next to the Nazirite (Num. 6:9)

- Wait 7 days, and shave the head (Num. 6:9).
- Mishnah says the hair is buried to prevent pollution.
- Sacrifices are brought:
 - 2 turtledoves or two pigeons – 1 is sin offering, the other is burnt offering.
 - Male lamb as trespass offering. Trespass offering says there's "debt."
- Start over.

VII. Successfully Completing the Vow (6:13-21).

- **Burnt offering**, **sin offering**, **peace offering**, **grain & drink offering** (Num. 6:14-15)
- **Shave** consecrated head (Num. 6:18).
- **Hair is burned under the peace offering** (Num. 6:18)
- **Peace offering** includes right shoulder (**wave offering**) and right thigh (**heave offering**) (Num. 6:19-20). Together, this forms a cross.
 - There are 3 kinds of peace offerings: **vow**, **thanksgiving** & **voluntary** (Lev. 7:15-16).
- "Whatever else his hand is able to provide" – Numbers 6:21
 - Based on this, Israel developed a tradition of paying for the Nazirite offerings of poor Israelites.

VIII. Rabbis Tended to Frown Upon the Nazirite Vow.

Judaism does not like **asceticism**. Also, Simon the Just was concerned that people make the Nazirite vow in a fit of temper.

IX. Jesus Addressed the Heart Behind the Vow.

Matthew 5:33-37 (NKJV) – ³³ "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' ³⁴ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair

white or black. ³⁷ But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

How do we know Jesus is speaking to the heart behind the vow? *Context.*

In Matthew 5, Jesus consistently says, "It is all about the heart."

Matthew 5:17 (NKJV) – "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to **fulfill**."

"Fulfill" does **not** mean "done away with" or "replaced."

Rather, He is saying, "I am here to show you the full meaning."

Matthew 5:21-22 (NKJV) – ²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not **murder**, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

Matthew 5:27-28 (NKJV) – ²⁷ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit **adultery**.' ²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matthew 5:31-32 (NKJV) – ³¹ "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever **divorces** his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' ³² But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

Matthew 5:38-39 (NKJV) – ³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, '**An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth**.' ³⁹ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

Matthew 5:43-44 (NKJV) – ⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, '**You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy**.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

X. Should We Make Vows?

- Wedding vows
- Child dedications
- Witnesses in Court
- Enrollment in the military
- Salvation
- Closest application today: a vow for a partial fast as an act of consecration.