

NASO – “TAKE THE SUM”

NUMBERS (BE’MIDBAR) 4:21 – 7:89

INTRODUCTION: CONCLUDING VERSES OF CHAPTER 4

1. As this portion begins, the text continues the task of assigning the families of Levi to their specific tasks.
2. Namely, it addresses the Gershonites and their duty of carrying the hangings and coverings.
3. That the Gershonites are descended from the firstborn and are, yet, given less honorable task is not to say that it was less important.
 - a. Kohathites being allowed to carry ark should not denigrate other families.
 - b. The distinction simply serves to show reverence for the ark.
 - c. Just so happens that was their duty and Gershon was responsible for other things.
4. Yet, the hanging and coverings had to be in place in order to house the furnishings.
5. Some are appointed for more visible tasks, some not.
 - a. Yet each functioning in his own purpose serves the overall plan of the Creator.
 - b. We should be content to function in that purpose.
6. All Levites were placed in service to the priests and were to be at their commandment.
 - a. Considering they are “hosts of Israel” or “armies of Israel” someone has to command.
 - b. Someone has to command others and on down the line.
7. Consider that Merari was the “grunt” - carrying bars, beams and sockets, etc.
 - a. These were the heaviest components.
 - b. Yet, they were given the carts and wagons to perform their role.
8. Again, each must function in his purpose and not envy that of the other.
 - a. We have no idea what the other more “glamorous” role has to endure to function.

CHAPTER 5: PURIFICATION OF THE CAMP

1. Verse 1-2: Considering the sanctity of the Sanctuary, the camp itself had to ritually clean.
 - a. There could be no contamination or *tumah*.
2. Some have a hard time understanding the “whys” of this but rabbis say these are the decrees of a king and must be followed; He has His reasons.
3. The first mentioned is the removal of the *metzora* or “leper.”
 - a. Followed by the one who has an “issue” (Lev. 15).
 - b. In turn followed by the one who comes in contact with a corpse.
4. Rabbinical sources say the leper was excluded from the entire camp, the one with the issue from the Sanctuary and the Levitical encampment and the one who touched a corpse only from the Sanctuary.
5. Verse 4: “so did the children of Israel” – those who enforced and those affected complied.
6. Verse 6: Removal of physical impurity should be accompanied by removal of spiritual impurity.
 - a. Trespass against fellow man is a trespass against God (verse 6).
7. Verse 7: “they shall confess” – can there be repentance if there is no confession?
 - a. If there is no repentance can there be forgiveness?
 - b. Rambam sees in this verse the general command of repentance be rooted in confession.

8. This in context of restoring “stolen property.”
9. In defining stolen property, the Torah establishes the criteria:
 - a. Forbidden to deprive them of their property even if they would never miss it.
 - b. Even easier to justify if the person is a stranger with no one to leave it to.
 - c. A priest or Levite might justify taking from someone what Torah says is “his.”
10. In short, we are not to take anything that is not given to us by rightful owner.
 - a. In the end, it is God who gives to us.
 - b. We cannot justify taking regardless of how great or trivial it may be.
11. On that note, verse 10 says: “A man’s hallowed things shall be his; whatsoever he gives the priests shall be his.”
12. When one of the community designates something of his as offering or first fruits to the priest, it is his to designate which priest it goes to.
 - a. When the priest receives it, it is his to do with as he wishes.

CHAPTER 5: ORDEAL OF JEALOUSY

1. This ordinance was intended to remove suspicion of unfaithfulness from midst of Israel.
 - a. This sin works to destroy the foundation of social and moral order.
 - b. Becomes necessary to discover truth in times when there is doubt.
 - c. At same time, preserve innocence of wife against unreasonable jealousy.
2. If she is innocent, no one is injured; if guilty, the ordeal produces results that alert the world.
 - a. She would die a terrible death if guilty and proven by the ordeal.
 - b. Only instance in Torah where guilt is proven by ordeal and miraculous means.
 - c. Fear of imminent death, no doubt, was to provoke the truth.
 - d. If she did confess, the marriage would end in divorce.
 - e. After destruction of Temple it was no longer employed.
 - f. Only effective if Israel conducted themselves righteously.
 - g. In fact, husband must be pure or there would be no miraculous manifestation.
3. Because it was such an ordeal, it did not happen just because a husband was jealous.
 - a. There had to be ample reason for his jealousy.
 - b. Husband had to forbid contact with suspected man in presence of witnesses.
 - c. If she disobeyed, only then could he subject her to the ordeal.
 - d. Only if a miracle from God proved her innocence would he trust her again.
4. Implied is that she behaved in an unseemly manner.
 - a. Yet there is no proof of her guilt or innocence.
 - b. Verse 13 – “defiled in secrecy” – suggests one witness would annul need for ordeal.
5. The unfaithfulness is described as “treachery”; same term for taking Sanctuary property for one’s own personal use.
 - a. In this she becomes “defiled,” i.e. a harlot.
 - b. Which reminds us the harlot in Revelation 17 – a wife who commits fornication.
 - c. She will be destroyed by fire.
6. Thus, we are to understand that marriage is not so that our physical desires can be quenched.
 - a. Marriage is sacred relationship that demands purity and faithfulness.
 - b. It mirrors our relationship with the Creator as His wife – or not.
7. Through this ordeal, we also learn that secret sins will, miraculously, be found out in order that Israel – where God resides – might be holy and worthy of His presence.

- a. If we are to be His wife, we must be pure and above reproach.

“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight” – Colossians 1:21-22

- 8. Verse 15: Notice a meal offering is brought for her but devoid of oil or frankincense.
 - a. It would be out of place for such “sweet” things to be used here.
 - b. This offering brings “iniquity to remembrance.”
- 9. There are some “offerings” that remind God of the iniquity of His people.
 - a. Is it possible that this is what writer of Hebrews alludes to?
 - b. They who have turned from God “crucify again for themselves the Son of God.”
 - c. In that circumstance, does His offering bring their iniquity to remembrance?
- 10. Verse 16: “Brought before the LORD” – and provoked to confess.
 - a. Occurred near the brazen altar in wilderness.
 - b. In temple times, it occurred near the eastern gate of the Temple.
 - c. Interesting considering an incident involving Y’shua.
 - d. Is this where He wrote in the dust when presented with the adulteress woman?
 - e. Dust from the Sanctuary was part of the ordeal.
- 11. If innocent, she would, presumably, welcome the ordeal knowing God would vindicate.
 - a. There is a calm in knowing, when innocent, God will indeed vindicate.
 - b. Does He allow “ordeals” in order to vindicate His people?

**“Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the LORD; I shall not slip. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my mind and my heart.”
- Psalm 26:1-2**

- 12. Judgment is not necessarily a bad thing; depends on which side of law you are on.
- 13. Verse 17: Took “holy water” from the brass laver and poured it into earthen vessel.
 - a. Also took dust from the tabernacle floor and mixed with the water.
- 14. In earlier portions, we learned that earthen vessels could absorb the “holiness” of meats or the contamination of unclean things.
 - a. Earthen vessels absorb those things we allow ourselves to come in contact with.
 - b. In this instance, the ordeal will demonstrate what is on the inside for all to see.
 - c. Good or bad; if bad it will be that people will speak of this woman as curse.
 - d. Reminds of the Scarlet Letter
- 15. Good may also be evident; water taken from laver said to be made from the mirrors of the Israelite women who wanted to shun vanity.
 - a. Vanity is seen as a contributing factor to unfaithfulness.
 - b. If innocent, demonstrates that she is faithful as those women were faithful to husbands.
- 16. Again, dust from tabernacle was used; in Temple floor was marble and required a tile to be lifted in order to take the dust.
 - a. If Y’shua’s writing in dust parallels ritual, then He would have been in specific place.
- 17 Verse 18: Her hair is let loose – considered to be a sign of mourning.
 - a. Either because she is guilty, she gave reason for jealousy or because of distrust.
 - b. Women did not typically appear in public with hair loosed.

- c. Would place in her hands the meal offering.
 - d. Would hold in his hands the waters of bitterness – not taste but its effect upon guilty.
18. After hearing the oath the punishment to the guilty, if she agreed, she would say “amen.”
 - a. So be it – she agreed to the terms.
 - b. Terms were – thigh (womb) would collapse and belly would swell.
 - c. That which is the symbol of intimate relations would no longer be able to produce.
 19. Verse 23: On scroll, the priest would write the oath (with YHVH) and blot out into the water.
 - a. In effect, she would drink the words of the oath coupled with the name of God.
 - b. Would seem that only the truly innocent would be inclined to continue.
 20. This reminds us of the Golden Calf incident: Moses melted down the calf.
 - a. He mixed the gold with water and made them drink.
 - b. This identified those who were guilty that the Levites might destroy them.
 - c. It is believed that their bellies swelled because they had been unfaithful to God.
 - d. He is a jealous God – His name is jealous.
 21. That they were cavorting with a “beast” again reminds us of the harlot of Revelation 17.
 - a. Ultimately this is to teach His people what He expects of us – faithfulness.
 - b. What we can expect of Him should His jealousy be aroused.
 22. Footnote: Jewish convert Queen Helena gave a tablet of gold to Temple.
 - a. Written on it was the Ordeal of Jealousy.
 - b. This temple did not employ this ordeal because it would not have been effective.
 - c. They were guilty of the unfaithfulness this ritual teaches of.
 - d. They again were making gods of gold – how ironic.
 23. If she was cleared of wrongdoing, as a reward God would bless her with offspring.

CHAPTER 6: VOWS OF A NAZIRITE

1. In sharp contrast to the previous chapter, which detailed those excluded from community because of impurity – physically and spiritually, this chapter addresses those who wish to devote themselves to a higher standard of purity.
2. The wayward wife allowed her sensual passions to overcome her, adultery became a temptation too powerful to overcome.
 - a. To escape this trap, one should avoid anything that could blur spiritual vision.
 - b. Furthermore, one should stimulate spiritual vision by adopting lifestyle of holiness.
3. The *Nazir* נזיר (Nazirite) took vows that included three things:
 - The hair to remain unshorn during the term of the vow.
 - Abstinence from intoxicants.
 - Avoid contact with a dead body.
4. Any Israelite might take the vow for purely personal reasons:
 - Thanksgiving for recovery from sickness.
 - Birth of a child.
 - Recommitment to YHVH.
5. The minimum number of days was considered 30 but could be longer.
 - a. Scripture even records life-long Nazirites, like the Essenes.
 - b. Some believe John the Baptist was an Essene and a Nazirite.
 - c. For the record, a Nazirite is not a Nazarene – two different root words.
6. Paul took a vow of a Nazirite.

“So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.” – Acts 18:18

7. Perhaps the most famous Nazirite is Samson, but not the best example (Judges 13:5).
 - a. Though his story does testify of God’s longsuffering.
 - b. He broke every vow but his strength didn’t leave him until his hair was shorn.
 - c. Why was his hair so important?
8. A *Nazir* is one “dedicated” in many ways similar to the priest.
 - The priest had to abstain from wine before and during ministry in the Sanctuary.
 - The Nazir must abstain from wine or any intoxicating drink during the term of his vow.
9. Verse 3: Was to abstain from anything made from grapes, in fact.
 - a. The primary prohibition was to avoid wine but Torah went on to add other things.
 - b. Rabbis deduce from this the validation for “fences.”
 - c. In other words, to remain true to vow, stay away from anything that reminds you.
 - d. There is some validity to this, but like anything man can take it overboard.
10. Verse 5: “No razor shall come upon his head” – hair symbolizes insulation from the world.
 - a. By letting hair grow, Nazir created a barrier between his mind and the world.
 - b. That he may dedicated to God and not the world.
 - c. The Torah considered him “holy” – set apart.
11. Verse 7: “Unclean to his father” – in respect to a dead body.
 - a. His vow required of him the same restrictions imposed upon the High Priest.
12. “His consecration unto God” – literally, “the crown of his God.”
 - a. Term “crown” or “consecration” is נֵזֶר *nezer* from which we get נָזִיר *Nazir*.
 - b. Thus his hair served as “crown” of his consecration – his loyalty unto God.
 - c. This same term - נֵזֶר *nezer* - is used to describe golden crown worn by High Priest.
 - d. It is then synonymous with the crown of the High Priest which said *kadosh l’YHVH*.
13. So why was cutting his hair the last straw for Samson – he defiled his crown.
 - a. With a wayward woman, no less.
14. If involuntarily defiled by a dead body, must shave his head that day.
 - a. Any days of vow are voided and when, on 8th day, he is clean, he must renew the vow.
15. When he completes the vow he:
 - Present offerings unto the LORD.
 - Shaves his head of the crown (hair) and it is burned upon the altar.
16. Verse 20: Afterwards, he may drink wine and, presumably, cut his hair.
17. Verse 21: Exhorted to keep the vow he made – any vow should be kept.

“That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.” – Deut. 23:23

CHAPTER 6: PRIESTLY BLESSING

1. The בְּרַכַּת כֹּהֲנִים *birchat kohanim* is a simple prayer or blessing:
 - a. Three verses of three, five and seven words respectively (15 words total).
2. It is considered to be a crown – of the sacred order that Israel became in its journey to Canaan.

3. Verse 23: “On this wise you shall bless” – only a priest, not a stranger was to bless Israel.
 - a. To be done standing with arms and hands outstretched by a sober priest.
 - b. Must be given in the Hebrew tongue.
4. Verse 24: “the Lord bless you and keep you” – “keep” is literally “guard you.”
5. Physical, material blessings can be fragile, thus we seek God’s protection that the blessings He has bestowed will not be taken or fade away by uncertain conditions or evil people.
6. Verse 25: “Make His face to shine upon you” – implies outpouring of love and favor.
 - a. Contrasted with “hiding His face from us.”

“And the LORD said to Moses: ‘Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake me and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, ‘have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?’ And I will surely hide my face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods.” – Deut. 31:16-18

7. If we pray that He will make His face shine upon us, isn’t because we have turned ours toward Him in abandoning these “other gods” and returned to His Torah?
 - a. Then He will be gracious unto us.
8. One’s face is indication of attitude toward someone else.
 - a. If He hides His face in anger, then He turns His face towards us when not angered.
 - b. As a result, we can lift our heads for “our redemption is at hand.”
9. Verse 26: “And establish peace” – the seal of all blessings.
 - a. Without peace, blessing are valueless.
10. A prayer of every synagogue service is: “May He who makes peace in the Heavens grant peace unto us.”
11. In the very last words of the Mishnah it says:

“R’Shimon ben Chalafta said, the Holy One, blessed is He, could find no container that would hold Israel’s blessings as well as peace, as it says, ‘the LORD will give might to His nation, the LORD will bless His nation with peace.’ ” (quoting Psalm 29:11)

12. Peace is not the absence of conflict but harmony between two opposing forces.
 - a. With man, it is balance between needs of the body and higher duty to the soul.
 - b. Suppressing our carnality that the spiritual man might thrive and prosper in God’s way.
13. Ultimate peace will be realized with coming of Messiah; something the prophets yearned for.
 - a. Isaiah 11:6-10 – the lion and the lamb.
14. Finally, verse 27: “So shall they put my name upon you” – pronounced the name YHVH.
 - a. “And I shall bless them” – not the priest.
 - b. He was merely the channel by which God blessed His people.

CHAPTER 7: OFFERING OF THE PRINCES

1. This chapter details the offerings of the 12 princes of Israel at the time Moses dedicated altar.

- a. Included sanctification of all the vessels associated with it as well as *mishkan*.
 - b. This would have occurred just after the inauguration of priests in Lev. 8.
2. The offerings consist of:
 - Gifts for the transport of the Sanctuary.
 - Vessels for the service of the Sanctuary.
 - Animals for the dedication service.
3. Occurred on 12 separate days, each prince given his day.
 - a. Yet notice the gifts are identical suggesting none tried to outdo the other.
4. The first prince to offer was Nachshon (serpent) of Judah.
 - a. Tradition says that when Israel was hesitant to pass through the sea, he went first.
 - b. This is why he was given privilege of being first to offer at the dedication.
5. Needless to say, these princes were not poor but fairly wealthy, so it seems.
 - a. Had taken plunder from the Egyptians.
6. Though identical, it is taught that the offering represented something unique for each tribe.
 - a. Represented inner character and spoke of tribal destiny for the good of nation.
 - b. Torah does list them separately even though they are exactly the same.
 - c. Different conclusions as to what each offering represented for that tribe.
7. We can glean that two people can offer the same gift but it means something unique to each individual – yet God knows the distinctions even if man cannot detect them.
8. At the conclusion of the dedication, Moses entered and heard the Voice speaking to Him.
 - a. Said to be audible only to Moses.
9. When Moses led them out and brought them to the mountain, may have felt his work was done.
 - a. His work had just begun: led them, interceded for them, striven with them.
 - b. Now must teach them.
10. Thus, if we are to be dedicated to His service, we must follow the example.
 - a. Most importantly, we must be able to hear His voice speak.