

PARASHAT NASSO

(TAKE, ELEVATE)

NUMBERS 4:21-7:89

ETZ CHAYEEM HOO (HE IS A TREE OF LIFE)

Yeshua is a tree of life to those who take hold of Him, and those who support Him are praiseworthy. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all of His paths are shalom. Bring us back YHVH to You, and we shall come, renew our days as of old.

As we begin to study the Torah let us never forget that YESHUA THE MESSIAH is the Living Torah, the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh. He is the way, the truth and the life — the Living Manna sent from heaven. Without Him living in our lives through the indwelling Presence of his Set-Apart/Kadosh Spirit (Who leads us into all truth and revelation) the Written Torah can become the dead letter of the law!

Haftorah Reading:

Judges 13:2-25

B'rit Chadashah:

Yeshua was 30 years old when starting his ministry: **Luke 3:23**

On Yeshua healing/cleansing a leper: **Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45**

On spiritual uncleanness: **Matthew 5:27-32**

On committing adultery: **Romans 13:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19; John 8:1-11; James 2:11**

Paul and the Nazarite vow: **Acts 21:17-26**

A vision of Elohim's throne room in heaven: **Revelation 4:1-11**

Outline of This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion):

—4:21 The Responsibilities of the Levites Who Were the Sons of Gershon

—4:29 The Responsibilities of the Levites Who Were the Sons of Merari

—4:38 The Total Number of the Gershonites and Merarites

—5:1 Cleanliness in the Camp; Unclean Persons Put Outside the Camp

—5:5 Theft From a Fellow Israelite and the Terms of Restitution

—5:11 The Adulterous Wife or *Sotah*

—5:15 The Adulterous Wife Brought Before the Priest

—5:16 Test and Confession of the Adulterous Wife

—5:23 The Scroll Inscribed With the Curses Washed in the Bitter Water That the Adulterous Wife Drinks

—6:1 The Nazarite Vow

—6:9 A Nazarite Who Suddenly Becomes Contaminated

—6:13 Completion of the Term

- 6:22 The Priestly or Aaronic Blessings
- 7:1 The Tribal Leaders Present Offerings on the Day of the Tabernacle's Inauguration
- 7:12 The Offerings
- 7:84 The Offerings Are Tallied
- 7:89 Moses Enters the Tabernacle Where YHVH Speaks to Him From Between the Cherubim

Study Questions for This Week's Midrash (Torah Discussion):

1 So far we have seen YHVH redeem Israel out of Egypt and raise up the nation of Israel. At Mount Sinai, he wedded himself spiritually to that nation and called her “my people,” “a peculiar people” and a “kingdom of priests.” He had given them his instructions in righteousness, the Torah, making them set-apart from all other peoples of the earth. They had completed building the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) through which a sinful and unrighteous people could be reconciled to a righteous Elohim. It was also a place for a loving Creator and Father to dwell with or tabernacle among his people. YHVH then appointed a priesthood to care for and minister in the Tabernacle and to act as intermediaries between man and Elohim. All of this was to help sinful man to draw close in loving relationship to Elohim.

In the previous several chapters of Numbers, YHVH has instructed the Levite priests to literally camp around the Tabernacle to act as a buffer between YHVH and his people. The rabbis teach that YHVH's Sanctuary being placed in the center of the camp shows us unequivocally the nature and calling of this nation. The Torah was to be Israel's soul, its hold and its bond. Elohim did not want to establish just a temple or a church-going congregation, but a nation and a community whose whole social life was built on the Torah. Fulfilling the Torah was to be the condition for Elohim's Presence to be in the midst of that nation (Rabbi S. R. Hirsch commentary on Num 5:1). This is a true and wonderful concept. But does it go far enough? Ponder on the ramifications of this statement for us today as “born again” Israelite believers. Does this adequately express the ultimate heart and will of the Father for his people? For Jews, the Torah is the focal or launching point of their devotion to YHVH. For Christians, it is the Person and work of Jesus Christ (or properly, Yeshua the Messiah (*Mashiach*)). As Torah-loving and obedient believers in Yeshua, what unique meaning does the Tabernacle hold for us that both the rabbis and traditional Christian Bible teachers have missed?

- 2** 5:6–7, *They shall confess their sin.* We all sin and cause offense against our Heavenly Father and fellow man. When we are convicted of our sin or it is brought to our attention by someone else how quick are we to repent, seek forgiveness and make restitution, when necessary? When was the last time you confessed a sin to someone and asked him or her to forgive you? When was the last time you repented of anything? Husbands, do you repent to your wives? Wives do you repent to your husbands? James 5:16 says to, “Confess your faults to one another ...” and then indicates that because we fail to do so our physical healings may be impeded.
- 3** 5:11–31, The adultery rate in the Christian church is around 50 percent for men and a little less for women. What if that figure included looking upon a member of the opposite sex and having sinful desires toward them (as Yeshua forbade in Matt 5:27–28)? How high would it be then? Men, how many of you have committed or are committing adultery in your hearts on a regular basis thereby being unfaithful to your wives?
- 4** 5:11–31, This passage deals with a curious ritual involving wives suspected of adultery called the Law of Jealousies whereby the woman is hauled before the priest, her head is uncovered and, according to rabbinic tradition, her dress is ripped open just above her breasts (*b. Talmud Sota 7a*). She then has the choice to drink a concoction of earth from the floor of the Tabernacle mixed with the set-apart (*kadosh*) water from the Bronze Laver into which is dipped a piece of paper that contains the curses written on it. If she is guilty of the charges of adultery when she drinks the bitter waters, her belly shall swell and her thigh (Heb. *yarek* or side or loins, which are the seat of procreative power) shall rot as a result of a divine judgment. If she is guiltless the bitter waters will have no effect on her. If she refuses to drink the bitter water and her husband still suspects her unfaithfulness, then he is free to divorce her, even though she has

admitted no guilt. According to rabbinic tradition, this legal procedure was carried out by Israel's highest court in Jerusalem (*Sota* 7b).

Some Messianic biblical commentators see a parallel here between the adulterous woman and the trial and execution of Yeshua at the cross. After only a casual reflection on the issues, this may seem unlikely. But ponder this for a moment. Did YHVH liken his relationship to Israel as a marriage? (See Ezek 16.) Did Israel (both houses) remain faithful to her (their) marriage covenants? (See Ezek chapters 16 and 23; Jer 3; the entire book of Hosea.) Under the Torah, adultery was a capital offense. Was YHVH faithful to his marriage covenants with Israel? Of course. He is not a sinner (i.e., a violator of his own Torah, 1 John 3:4). With whom was the fault then? It was with the House of Israel and the House of Judah! (See Heb 8:7–8.) Have we all sinned (violated YHVH's Torah) and fallen short of his glory? (See Rom 6:23.) What are the wages of sin? (See Rom 3:23 and Ezek 18:4.)

“But I am a Gentile Christian, not an Israelite,” you may respond. “Neither I nor my ancestors was ever an Israelite who was spiritually married to YHVH. Therefore, I am not guilty of spiritual unfaithfulness. I have not broken any marriage covenants with YHVH.” In response, first, who did Yeshua come to redeem? (See Matt 15:24.) Are we all not likened to the lost sheep of the House of Israel? (See Isa 53:6.) Did not Paul equate Gentile believers with the House of Israel? (See Rom 9:25–29 and compare with Hos 2:23; Isa 10:22–23.) Who did Jacob prophesy that the descendant of Ephraim and Manasseh would be? (Read Genesis 48:14–16.) In this Scripture passage, Jacob speaks of a Messenger from heaven who redeemed him from all evil, he makes the sign of the paleo-Hebrew letter *tav* over his grandsons, which is the sign of the cross and in that ancient script pictographically means “seal, covenant or sign of the covenant.” He then speaks of them growing into a multitude in the midst of the earth, or becoming like fish in the sea of humanity (see the Orthodox Jewish *ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash/Tanach* translation of this verse). Who are these descendants who have the sign of the cross, the fish as their symbol and speak of a Redeemer or Savior? Spiritually speaking, are you not that adulterous woman? Furthermore, does Paul not clearly state that ALL those who have put their trusting faith in Yeshua the Messiah are Israel and Abraham is their father? (Read Rom 4:16; 9:8–11; Gal 3:7, 9, 14, 28, 29.)

Now that we have established this point, let's ask the next question. At the cross did Yeshua bear upon himself all of our sins? (See Isa 53:4–6.) Did he even bear upon himself our guilt for committing spiritual adultery? Did he die in our place by becoming like the adulterous woman that we were? Was the crucifixion like drinking a bitter cup for him? (Matt 26:39, 42; John 18:11). Was Yeshua hauled before the highest religious court in the land of Israel in Jerusalem to stand trial prior to his death? (See Matt 26:57–68.) Was he stripped of his garments? (See Matt 27:31.) Was his side ripped open by the Roman soldier's spear? (See John 19:34.) As a substitution for us, he took the curses against us for adultery that in times past would have been written down on paper (Num 5:23). In light of this, what does Paul say in Colossians 2:12–15, with special emphasis on verse 14, that Yeshua did with those curses against us? For those who are washed in Yeshua's redeeming blood and have been buried with him in water immersion/baptism (Col 2:12 cp. Rom 6:3–11), does the devil, who is the accuser of the brethren, have any charges to lay against us any more? (Read Col 2:15!)

5 6:1–21, The fact that the instructions for those taking a Nazarite vow immediately follow those regarding an adulterous woman underscores the fact that to lead a chaste life one must not do anything that would stimulate the evil inclination (carnal nature) and incite it to sin (such as adultery). The evil imaginations of the heart are easily aroused and the consumption of wine can lead to sin. A Nazarite avoided wine for this reason in order to facilitate the leading of a chaste, *kadosh* (set-apart) life. What carnal indulgences do we permit in our lives that war against our spirit man and weaken us morally so that we are more susceptible to fall into temptation and sin? Do we watch television? The show may be okay, but what about the illicit (sexually explicit) advertisements? How about our choice of friends? In 1 Corinthians 15:33 we read, “Evil company corrupts good habits.” Though we may not be under a Nazarite vow, we must nonetheless lead chaste, *kadosh* and pure lives abstaining from that which contaminates, corrupts and brings spiritual death. Abstain from all appearances of evil (1 Thess 5:22) and the fleshly lusts that war against our souls (1 Peter 2:11).

This week's Haftorah portion recounts the story of Samson, a mighty judge in Israel and man of great physical prowess who fell because he could not control his sensual desires. Men, learn a lesson here!

- 6** 6:22–27, The Aaronic Blessing is about the power of blessing and the power of our words. Scripture teaches that our words can heal, build up and encourage, or kill, tear down and curse, that the power of life and death is in the tongue. What kind of words come from your mouth—especially to your spouse and children? Charity begins at home. How often do you speak blessings over your children and spouse? Do you bless those who curse you? How about those who cut you off in traffic and similar situations? If others could see how we treat our loved ones (and our enemies) in secret via our words how would their impression of us change? YHVH sees!
- 7** The Levitical priesthood was one of YHVH's blessings or marriage gifts to his bride, Israel. It was given to her at the time of their marriage to him at Mount Sinai. The Aaronic or Priestly Blessings of Numbers 6:22–27 indicate that the priests were to be a conduit of YHVH's blessings to his people. *The ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash* correctly states it this way: “[The priests did not] have any independent power to confer or withhold blessings—only God can assure people of success, abundance, and happiness—but that part of their Temple service is to be the conduit through which God's blessing would be pronounced on His people” (p. 762). Rabbi Hirsch in his commentary on the priestly blessing states that it is Jewish tradition for the human instrument conveying the blessing to raise his hands (vertically and not horizontally) to heaven while reciting this blessing so as not to give the people the impression that the priest is conveying the blessing, but that it is coming from heaven (*The Pentateuch Numbers*, p. 99, Judaica Press). The rabbis further note that in Numbers 6:22–23, the Torah uses the word *saying* three times to emphasize the fact that the blessings flow from YHVH to the Israelites and are to be passed on to subsequent generations. We are YHVH's priesthood now (“a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a *kadosh* nation, a peculiar people,” 1 Pet 2:9). Are you an instrument of blessing everywhere you go? Do you ask YHVH to use you every day to spread the light of his truth and his love to others?
- 8** 7:22–27, The Aaronic Blessing can be subdivided into three sections:
- (a) **The First Blessing:** *May YHVH bless you and safeguard you.* The rabbis take this to refer to the material and physical blessings that Torah obedience brings as enumerated in Deuteronomy 28:1–14. This includes good health, wealth, divine protection and victory over enemies. YHVH's blessing and his safeguarding of those blessings from those who would kill, steal and destroy them go hand-in-hand. The rabbis teach that “the best way for someone to preserve his wealth is to use it for charity and good deeds. That assures him of God's continued blessing” (Ibid. p. 763).
 - (b) **The Second Blessing:** *May YHVH illuminate his countenance for you and be gracious to you.* The rabbis teach that this illumination refers to the light of the Torah and they cite Proverbs 6:23, “For the commandment is a lamp and the Torah is a light.” Compare this with what John said about Yeshua in John 1:1–14; 8:12; 9:5. YHVH's grace involves him granting his people Torah knowledge, wisdom and understanding to utilize Torah properly and fully; to use the insights gained therefrom to comprehend his purposes (Ibid. p. 763).
 - (c) **The Third Blessing:** *May YHVH lift his countenance and establish peace/shalom for you.* In Hebraic thought, the idea of YHVH's face or countenance shining toward his people is a metaphor of divine grace and favor. Contrariwise, when his face is turned against his people, this represents divine disapproval and shame upon his people (For examples of this in Scripture see Pss 4:6; 31:16; 67:1 cp. Lev 17:10; 20:5, 6, 17; Deut 31:17; 2 Chron 30:9; Ps 34:16; Jer 44:11; Ezek 7:22.). The rabbis note that peace is an essential component of the other blessings, for what good is physical blessings and spiritual insight if one's life is devoid of peace? What is the Jewish concept of peace? It is balance, which is the absence of strife between the opposing forces in one's life. Sin disrupts this balance and causes strife and warfare as well as creating a barrier between YHVH and his people (Read what Yeshua, the greatest Rabbi of all, taught about this in Matthew 5:23–24.). When such strife and barriers exist causing the negation of peace, what are some things one must do to restore the peace? After all, Yeshua said, “Blessed [Happy] are the peacemakers ...” Does peace just happen or is it necessary to

exert effort to create it? Can there be peace where there is sin (i.e., Torahlessness)? Does it logically follow that the more our ways line up with the Torah of YHVH, the more our ways are pleasing to him, the more peace we will experience in all our relationships? (Read Proverbs 16:7.)

9 **6:27, Put my name upon.** What does it mean to “put my name upon the children of Israel”? Can you think of some passages in the Apostolic Scriptures that speak of blessing, power and authority for the believer in the name of Yeshua? (See Matt 28:19; Mark 16:17; John 14:13; Acts 2:38; 3:6; 9:27; 16:18.)

HAFTORAH READING — JUDGES 13:2-25

The Birth of Samson: A Man Mighty on the Outside, But Weak on the Inside

Ever since the death of Joshua and during the time of the judges the spiritual and moral state of Israel slowly declined until the time of Samson. As *The ArtScroll Rubin Edition Joshua/Judges Commentary* points out, Samson was a new kind of judge. “Up to this point, Israel’s sins would lead to foreign domination, followed by repentance and the emergence of a judge who would lead the people to defeat and expel the enemy. In this new period, the people’s descent was so serious that they did not merit a complete salvation of the sort that had been achieved by such judges as Deborah and Gideon.” Nevertheless, it was not in YHVH’s overall plan to let Israel’s enemies go completely unchecked so that the sublimation and eventual destruction of Israel would be complete. He used Samson to check the Philistines’ quest to totally subjugate the nation of Israel and to punish the former, while at the same time YHVH extended grace to Israel by relieving them of some pressure from their enemies (p. 195).

Samson judged Israel for twenty years (Judg 15:20), yet due to his moral weakness with women we can assume that he left that ministry in favor of sensual gratification. How many Christian leaders have fallen from positions of great responsibility and trust for the same reason? YHVH obviously knew of this proclivity in Samson, but he allowed Samson to lead Israel anyway. What is the lesson to be learned from this piece of history? It is this: often the leaders of a nation are a mirror reflection of the spiritual and moral state of majority of people in that nation. YHVH allows men to become leaders who have major moral failings, yet who will do the work of YHVH *in part*, but who are not totally committed to righteousness. YHVH hopes that this form of quasi-judgment upon a nation will help to wake the nation up to their precarious state spiritually and to the fact that they may be on the cusp of major divine judgement if they do not repent of their wicked ways. Some feel that America has been in this position for some time now in light of its recent presidential and congressional leaders whose moral failings have become very evident, if not socially acceptable, in some cases.

The theme that connects the Parashah and Haftorah portions is the Nazarite vow, which someone could take to sanctify them in special service to YHVH.

1 **13:4–5, For the child shall be a Nazarite** Child rearing and discipline begins not after a child is born, but before, as the story of Samson’s parents shows. Prior to his birth, they began to consecrate their lives in preparation for Samson’s birth. The piety and wisdom of Samson’s parents is proven by the fact that they begged for divine assistance and instruction. “There is need of much care for the right ordering both of ourselves and our children, that we may be duly separate from the world, and living sacrifices to [YHVH]” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary* on this chapter). Those of you who have children in your lives, how seriously do you take raising your children? Or, are they, in reality, a necessary inconvenience and you are counting down the days until they are out of your home? What tangible steps are you now taking with regard to the raising of your children to insure that they will be set-apart unto YHVH and will remain so when they are living independently of you?

2 **13:6, Told her husband.** Husbands and wives need to share with each other about their spiritual relationship and experiences they have with YHVH thereby strengthening their spiritual walk. YHVH planned for husbands and wives to synergize together as one spiritual unit, to be a dynamic balance, and to provide mutual accountability. Does your marriage function in this manner? Is your marriage out of balance where either the woman is the spiritual leader and mouthpiece, while the man leads a life of quiet acquiescence

in the background, or, on the contrary, where the man rules his kingdom as a tyrant with the wife acting as a subservient second-class citizen quietly bowing to the man's every wishes?

- 3** **13:8–11**, Manoah believed his wife's report from the Heavenly Messenger of YHVH even before he saw the proof of it and was willing to obey YHVH's instructions based solely on his wife's word. Yeshua commented about such individuals when he said to Thomas, "because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Review the Hebrews 11 "Hall of Faith." Are there any individuals listed here who did not manifest "believing before seeing" faith?
- 4** **13:20**, *The Messenger of YHVH ascended in the flame of the altar*. How is the pious, humble and reverent character of Manoah and his wife evidenced in this passage? When the Messenger of YHVH (the pre-incarnate Yeshua) ascended in the flame of the altar, what was YHVH showing this righteous couple? (See Pss 4:5; 51:16–19; cp. 34:18; Isa 57:15; 66:2.)
- 5** "The story of Samson is full of sadness. It reveals a nation utterly deteriorated and disintegrated, and a man who through self-indulgence weakens and eventually loses his God-given power to deliver his people. The time was, alas, to come when Scripture would record of him, 'he knew not that [YHVH] was departed from him (Judg 16:20)'" (*Soncino Edition Pentateuch*, p. 604). In the story of Samson, we have chronicled a man's path from spiritual greatness to the depths of weakness because of a moral failure that he had failed to master. Though raised by righteous parents, one seemingly insignificant sin was the chink in Samson's spiritual armor that brought this mighty man down. What can we learn from this sad story? (Read 2 Cor 10:3–5; Eph 6:10–18; Col 3:1–10.)
- 6** Samson was endowed from time to time with supernatural strength to accomplish great physical feats, yet he lacked the sanctifying grace abiding in him to transform his nature. One's possessing outer giftedness or charisma is no proof that one is upstanding morally or that one walks in righteousness. Have you ever met someone who, on the surface, seemed so gifted, so likable and so spiritual, yet once you got to know them it proved to be no more than show and veneer? They were mere frauds. One's moral character defines a person. Are you two persons or one? Are you on the outside what you are on the inside, or are you two different people, which is the biblical definition of a hypocrite (Matt 23:3, 25–28)?

