

Numbers 6:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD:

Analysis

God instructs Moses about the Nazirite vow, a voluntary consecration where an individual separates themselves to the LORD. The Hebrew 'nazir' (נָזִיר) means 'separated' or 'consecrated,' indicating one set apart for special devotion. The phrase 'when either man or woman shall separate themselves' emphasizes that this consecration was available to both sexes, unusual in ancient Israel's primarily male-oriented religious structures. The Nazirite vow represented extraordinary voluntary devotion beyond the regular requirements of the Law, demonstrating that while God commands certain obedience, He also welcomes additional consecration from willing hearts. The vow's three requirements (abstaining from wine/strong drink, not cutting hair, avoiding corpse contamination) symbolized complete dedication affecting appetites, appearance, and activities. This temporary separation to God illustrates the principle that genuine devotion requires distinction from ordinary life patterns. The Nazirite examples in Scripture (Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist) show that God uses consecrated individuals powerfully for His purposes. Christians today aren't called to Nazirite vows but to the greater reality of complete consecration to Christ as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2).

Historical Context

The Nazirite vow could be temporary (as described in Numbers 6) or lifelong (as with Samson and Samuel). Notable Nazirites include Samson (Judges 13), Samuel

(1 Samuel 1:11), and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15). The Apostle Paul apparently took a temporary Nazirite vow (Acts 18:18; 21:23-26), demonstrating the practice continued into the New Testament period. The vow's completion involved elaborate sacrifices at the tabernacle/temple (Numbers 6:13-20) and cutting the hair that had grown during the vow period, burning it with the peace offering. Archaeological evidence from ancient Israel includes references to 'separated ones' in inscriptions, though direct evidence of Nazirite practice is limited. The vow represented a way for ordinary Israelites to experience the consecration normally limited to priests and Levites. Rabbinic tradition developed detailed regulations about Nazirite vows, including minimum duration (thirty days) and complex rules about inadvertent violations.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does the voluntary nature of the Nazirite vow teach about God's desire for willing consecration beyond mere legal obedience?
2. How do the Nazirite restrictions (affecting appetites, appearance, and activities) illustrate that genuine devotion to God requires life changes visible to others?

Interlinear Text

דַּבֵּר	אֶל	בְּנֵי יִ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְאָמַרְתָּ	אֵלֶּה ׀
Speak	H413	unto the children	of Israel	and say	H413
H1696		H1121	H3478	H559	
	אֶל יֵשׁ	אִוְ	אִשָּׁה	כִּי	יִפְּלֹא
unto them	When either man	H176	or woman	H3588	shall separate
	H376		H802		H6381
					themselves to vow
					H5087
נָדָר	נָזִיר	לְהַזְיֵר	לְיהוָה:		
a vow	of a Nazarite	to separate	themselves unto the LORD		
H5088	H5139	H5144	H3068		

Additional Cross-References

Judges 13:5 (References Israel): For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

Romans 1:1 (Parallel theme): Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Hebrews 7:27 (Parallel theme): Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.