



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Monthly Message for the Consecrated

January 2022

The Law of the Nazarite

The word *Nazarite* is taken from the Hebrew verb "vow" meaning consecration or dedication. Jacob gave the title of Nazarite to his son Joseph, "*The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.*" (Genesis 49:26) because his heart had been devoted to the Lord, and because the Lord has dedicated the firstborn son to be His. "*Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine.*" (Exodus 13:2)

Behold the one who consecrates his heart to the Lord like Joseph is showered with blessings: "*The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors.*" The sixth chapter of the Book of Numbers comes immediately after the law of exposing the sinner woman. We find here the one who consecrates himself to God by his own will. The sin brings shame to the one committing it, while the one who consecrates himself to God shines among his brethren like Joseph, "*Her Nazirites were brighter than snow and whiter than milk.*" (Lamentations 4:7-8)

We see the appearance of the true nazarite *brighter than the snow* but when he submits himself to sin, he becomes *blacker than soot*, "*Now their appearance is blacker than soot.*"

Just as Leprosy was a symbol of sin and its consequences and as a leprotic symbolizes man after fall, so a nazarite symbolizes Adam before fall. There is no true nazarite in this world except our Lord Jesus Christ who said, "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me.*"

Behold Adam was forbidden from a tree and the nazirite was forbidden from vines (meaning a tree also). Just as the nazirite had relevant features, so the consecrated must have the attributes of The Lord Jesus.

There were three ways people were able to consecrate themselves to the Lord:

A- The Lord chooses a person by Himself to serve Him, such as Samson and John the Baptist (chosen while they were in the belly).

B- Parents consecrate their children to the Lord like the mother of Samuel (1Samuel 1: 10-11).

C- The person consecrates himself to the Lord for a certain period of his life.

The nazirite in the Old Testament would consecrate himself for a certain period of time while a Christian person consecrates himself to God for the entire life.

Maybe the Law of the Nazirite is the origin of the monastic movements in Christianity in which a monk forsakes all blood ties that bond him to the world (the father, the mother, the wife...), and forsakes all the worldly pleasures.

The Law of The Nazirite:

“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. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin.” (Numbers 6:3-4)

Wine refers to the worldly joy. Here the nazirite is forbidden to be joyful with the joys of the world. So, he refrains from wine and everything that has to do with it even the seed = the core.

It is for the sake of the Lord that he forsakes even what is allowed by his will not because it is defiled, but because he is interested in another food, saying with Christ, *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.”*

Perhaps God wanted not the nazirite to be intoxicated and forget the commandments of God: *“Lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted.”* (Proverbs 31:5). The abandonment of the consecrated of the joys

and pleasures of the world is because his eye is fixed on heaven and its joys (and this is what we do in fasting)

“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.” (Numbers 6:5).

Long hair is a dishonor to a man, *“Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?” (1Corinthians 11:14).*

Therefore, whoever let his hair grow is an example of one who forsakes the worldly glory and temporary honor to focus on the heavenly honor and glory (Christ denied the worldly kingdom). Cutting not hair refers to neglecting the adornment of the flesh and separation from the world.

“All the days that he separates himself to the Lord he shall not go near a dead body. He shall not [c]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. All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the Lord.” (Numbers 6:6-8)

Death is equal to sin and meaning that those who dedicate themselves to God do not come into contact with sin. It is required also from the nazirite not to be busy with the blood ties as he is currently busy with God alone. This is the meaning of what Jesus Christ said, *“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.”* Behold God does not reject bloody relations but wants us to rise up with our thoughts that we are members of the heavenly family, and that the relative who passed away is in heaven and we are going to him. *“Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:60).*

Then one said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You. But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” (Matthew 12:47-50)

Here we see the spiritual fellowship swallows every physical relationship and transcends it.

because his separation to God is on his head = the unshaved hair was a sign that this person is a nazirite of the Lord, and people see the hair that goes on and know this. If the nazirite touches a dead person, this is in front of the people, which is an insult to God, because in the duration of his dedication he is devoted entirely to God. This means, to us Christians, that people see us as the people of Christ, so that people should not see us committing sin, but “*that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*” Behold what was required from a nazirite was more than what was required from the priest in the Old Testament, and the priest was allowed to drink wine, but away from the tent. Regarding touching a dead person, the law of the Nazirite is the same as the law of the high priest.

“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. 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; 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. 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.” (Numbers 6:9-12)

his consecrated head = his head in the days of his consecration

Now how does the nazirite cleanse if he touches a dead person who suddenly dies and touches him without intending to?

Although what happened is not his fault, but to this extent God wants to explain His hatred of sin and His love of purity.

In this case, the nazirite must shave his head and on the eighth day he offers sacrifices. Since the sacrifices refer to Christ and cleansing has become in the blood of Christ, he then shaved the head and started again with the sacrifice. This is what happened with Christ when he died, was risen, we were risen with Him, and we had a new beginning. Because if we say that the nazirite resembles Adam before falling, then contact with a dead person is like a fall.