

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
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²¹The LORD spoke to Moses: ²²Take a census of the Gershonites also, by their ancestral house and by their clans. ²³Record them from the age of thirty years up to the age of fifty, all who are subject to service in the performance of tasks for the Tent of Meeting. ²⁴These are the duties of the Gershonite clans as to labor and portorage: ²⁵they shall carry the cloths of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting with its covering, the covering of dolphin skin that is on top of it, and the screen for the entrance of the Tent of Meeting; ²⁶the hangings of the enclosure, the screen at the entrance of the gate of the enclosure that surrounds the Tabernacle, the cords thereof, and the altar, and all their service equipment and all their accessories; and they shall perform the service. ²⁷All the duties of the Gershonites, all their portorage and all their service, shall be performed on orders from Aaron and his sons; you shall make them responsible for attending to all their portorage. ²⁸Those are the duties of the Gershonite clans for the Tent of Meeting;

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ²²נָשֵׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי גֵרְשׁוֹן גַּם־הֵם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם לְמִשְׁפַּחָתָם: ²³מִבֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וְיַמְעֹלָה עַד בֶּן־חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה תִּפְקֹד אוֹתָם כָּל־הַבָּא לְעֲבֹדָה לְעֲבֹד עֲבָדָה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ²⁴זֹאת עֲבֹדַת מִשְׁפַּחַת הַגֵּרְשֹׁנִי לְעֲבֹד וּלְמַשָּׂא: ²⁵וְנָשְׂאוּ אֶת־יְרִיעֹת הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְאֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד מִכֹּסֵהוּ וּמִכֹּסֵה הַתַּחַשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָלָיו מִלְּמַעְלָה וְאֶת־מִסְךְ פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ²⁶וְאֶת קַלְעֵי הַחֲצֵר וְאֶת־מִסְךְ פֶּתַח | שַׁעַר הַחֲצֵר אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְעַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ סָבִיב וְאֶת מִיתְרֵיהֶם וְאֶת־כָּל־כְּלֵי עֲבֹדָתָם וְאֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם וְעָבְדוּ: ²⁷עַל־פִּי אֶהְרֹן וּבְנָיו תִּהְיֶה כָּל־עֲבֹדַת בְּנֵי הַגֵּרְשֹׁנִי לְכָל־מַשְׂאָם וּלְכָל עֲבֹדָתָם וּפְקֻדָּתָם עֲלֵהֶם בְּמִשְׁמֶרֶת אֶת כָּל־מַשְׂאָם: ²⁸זֹאת עֲבֹדַת מִשְׁפַּחַת בְּנֵי הַגֵּרְשֹׁנִי בְּאֹהֶל

The Generation of the Exodus: The Wilderness Camp (continued)

THE SECOND CENSUS OF LEVITES (continued)

REMOVAL DUTIES OF THE GERSHONITES AND MERARITES (4:21–33)

The Gershonites are assigned to the tabernacle curtains; the Merarites are responsible for the tabernacle structure.

24. The Gershonites and Merarites are limited here to dismantling and assembling the tabernacle. During the march they serve as guards (v. 27).

25. carry Transport by packing and loading the curtains onto the wagons.

26. cords That held up the enclosure cur-

tains. (The curtains of the tent needed no cords; they simply were draped over the frame.)

accessories Refers either to the tabernacle curtains or to the work tools needed for their repair.

27. Aaron and his sons They assign the Gershonites to their tasks. But it is Aaron's son Ithamar who is their supervisor.

attending That is, guarding. Because the tabernacle curtains dismantled by the Gershonites and the tabernacle structure dismantled by the Merarites are to be transported by carts, these clans of Levites have no labor as such during the march; their duties are limited to guarding.

This is the longest *parashah* in the Torah. Most of its first half deals with circumstances when one's place in the community is in question be-

cause of unusual behavior. The second half deals with the offerings brought by each tribe as the sanctuary's dedication concludes.

they shall attend to them under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

²⁹As for the Merarites, you shall record them by the clans of their ancestral house; ³⁰you shall record them from the age of thirty years up to the age of fifty, all who are subject to service in the performance of the duties for the Tent of Meeting. ³¹These are their porterage tasks in connection with their various duties for the Tent of Meeting: the planks, the bars, the posts, and the sockets of the Tabernacle; ³²the posts around the enclosure and their sockets, pegs, and cords—all these furnishings and their service: you shall list by name the objects that are their porterage tasks. ³³Those are the duties of the Merarite clans, pertaining to their various duties in the Tent of Meeting under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

³⁴So Moses, Aaron, and the chieftains of the community recorded the Kohathites by the clans of their ancestral house, ³⁵from the age of thirty years up to the age of fifty, all who were subject to service for work relating to the Tent of Meeting. ³⁶Those recorded by their clans came to 2,750. ³⁷That was the enrollment of the Kohathite clans, all those who performed duties relating to the Tent of Meeting, whom Moses and Aaron recorded at the command of the LORD through Moses.

³⁸The Gershonites who were recorded by the clans of their ancestral house, ³⁹from the age of thirty years up to the age of fifty, all who were subject to service for work relating to the Tent of Meeting—⁴⁰those recorded by the clans of their ancestral house came to 2,630. ⁴¹That was

מועד ומשמרתם ביד איתמר בן-אהרן
הכהן: פ

²⁹בני מררי למשפחתם לבית-אבתם תפקד אתם: ³⁰מבן שלשים שנה ומעלה ועד בן-חמשים שנה תפקדם כל-הבא לצבא לעבד את-עבדת אהל מועד: ³¹וזאת משמרת משאם לכל-עבדתם באהל מועד קרשי המשכן ובריהיו ועמודיו ואדניו: ³²ועמודי החצר סביב ואדניהם ויתדתם ומיתריהם לכל-בליהם ולכל עבדתם ובשמת תפקדו את-כלי משמרת משאם: ³³וזאת עבדת משפחת בני מררי לכל-עבדתם באהל מועד ביד איתמר בן-אהרן הכהן:

³⁴ויפקד משה ואהרן ונשיאי העדה את-בני הקהתי למשפחתם ולבית אבתם: ³⁵מבן שלשים שנה ומעלה ועד בן-חמשים שנה כל-הבא לצבא לעבדה באהל מועד: ³⁶ויהיו פקדיהם למשפחתם אלפים שבע מאות וחמשים: ³⁷אלה פקודי משפחת הקהתי כל-העבד באהל מועד אשר פקד משה ואהרן על-פי יהוה ביד-משה: ט

³⁸ויפקוד בני גרשון למשפחותם ולבית אבתם: ³⁹מבן שלשים שנה ומעלה ועד בן-חמשים שנה כל-הבא לצבא לעבדה באהל מועד: ⁴⁰ויהיו פקדיהם למשפחתם לבית אבתם אלפים ושש מאות ושלשים: ⁴¹אלה פקודי משפחת

28. and they shall attend to them Literally, “and their guard duty” (*u-mishmartam*). This phrase belongs to the preceding clause. In this way, their task is parallel to that of the Merarites outlined in verse 33.

32. posts . . . pegs, and cords The cords are used to fasten the posts to the pegs. No pegs are mentioned in connection with the tabernacle

curtains; they are not needed because the tabernacle frame gives the curtains sufficient stability.

by name It was essential to label the numerous objects under Merarite charge, such as sockets, pegs, bars, and cords. Four wagons were needed to transport them all.

34–49. These verses describe how the second

the enrollment of the Gershonite clans, all those performing duties relating to the Tent of Meeting whom Moses and Aaron recorded at the command of the LORD.

⁴²The enrollment of the Merarite clans by the clans of their ancestral house, ⁴³from the age of thirty years up to the age of fifty, all who were subject to service for work relating to the Tent of Meeting—⁴⁴those recorded by their clans came to 3,200. ⁴⁵That was the enrollment of the Merarite clans which Moses and Aaron recorded at the command of the LORD through Moses.

⁴⁶All the Levites whom Moses, Aaron, and the chieftains of Israel recorded by the clans of their ancestral houses, ⁴⁷from the age of thirty years up to the age of fifty, all who were subject to duties of service and portorage relating to the Tent of Meeting—⁴⁸those recorded came to 8,580. ⁴⁹Each one was given responsibility for his service and portorage at the command of the LORD through Moses, and each was recorded as the LORD had commanded Moses.

5 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²Instruct the Israelites to remove from camp anyone with

census of Levites was carried out with the assistance of the tribal chieftains.

בְּנֵי גֵרְשׁוֹן כָּל־הָעֹבֵד בְּאֶהֱל מוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר
פָּקַד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן עַל־פִּי יְהוָה:
וּפְקוּדֵי מִשְׁפַּחַת בְּנֵי מְרָרִי לְמִשְׁפַּחַתָּם
לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם: ⁴³ מִבֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה
וְמֵעֵלָּה וְעַד בֶּן־חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה כָּל־הַבָּא
לְצַבָּא לְעִבְדָּה בְּאֶהֱל מוֹעֵד: ⁴⁴ וַיְהִי
פְקֻדֵיהֶם לְמִשְׁפַּחַתָּם שְׁלֹשֶׁת אֲלָפִים
וּמֵאֲתָיִם: ⁴⁵ אֵלֶּה פְקוּדֵי מִשְׁפַּחַת בְּנֵי
מְרָרִי אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן עַל־פִּי
יְהוָה בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה:

כָּל־הַפְּקוּדִים אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן
וּנְשִׂאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם לְמִשְׁפַּחַתָּם
וּלְבֵית אֲבֹתָם: ⁴⁷ מִבֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה
וְמֵעֵלָּה וְעַד בֶּן־חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה כָּל־הַבָּא
לְעִבְדָּה עֲבֹדַת עֲבֹדָה וְעֲבֹדַת מִשָּׂא בְּאֶהֱל
מוֹעֵד: ⁴⁸ וַיְהִי פְקֻדֵיהֶם שְׁמֹנֶת אֲלָפִים
וּחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת וּשְׁמֹנִים: ⁴⁹ עַל־פִּי יְהוָה
פָּקַד אוֹתָם בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה אִישׁ אִישׁ עַל־
עֲבֹדָתוֹ וְעַל־מִשָּׂאוֹ וּפְקוּדֵי אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה
יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: פ

ה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ² צַו
אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִשְׁלַחוּ מִן־הַמַּחֲנֶה כָּל־
שְׁלִישִׁי

^{49. each was recorded} The work assignment was by God's direct command to Moses.

PURIFICATION OF THE CAMP (5:1–6:27)

Chapters 5 and 6 consist of several laws inserted into the account of the preparations for the march through the wilderness. They deal with the prevention and elimination of impurity in the camp of the Israelites. These laws have in common the figure of the priest, who plays a prominent role in each case.

REMOVAL OF SEVERELY IMPURE PERSONS (5:1–4)

The camp of Israel is sacred and must retain its purity. Any man or woman who bears or contracts impurity must eliminate it by ritual means of purification and sacrifice.

CHAPTER 5

2. For the Midrash, the expulsion of diseased Israelites is not a hygienic measure. It

imagines that many of the Israelites who left Egypt were physically blemished as the result of their hard labor. When they arrived at Mount Sinai, they miraculously were made whole, so

an eruption or a discharge and anyone defiled by a corpse.³ Remove male and female alike; put them outside the camp so that they do not defile the camp of those in whose midst I dwell.

⁴The Israelites did so, putting them outside the camp; as the LORD had spoken to Moses, so the Israelites did.

⁵The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ⁶Speak to the Israelites: When a man or woman commits any wrong toward a fellow man, thus breaking faith with the LORD, and that person realizes his guilt, ⁷he shall confess the wrong that he has

צָרוּעַ וְכֹל־זָב וְכֹל טָמֵא לְנֶפֶשׁ: ³ מִזְכָּר עַד־נִקְבָּה תִשְׁלַחֻהוּ אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה תִשְׁלַחוּם וְלֹא יִטְמְאוּ אֶת־מַחֲנֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי שֹׁכֵן בְּתוֹכָם:

⁴ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁלַחוּ אוֹתָם אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בֶּן עֶשְׂרֵי בָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ⁵

⁵ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ⁶ דִּבֶּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי יַעֲשֶׂה מִכְּל־חַטָּאת הָאֵדָם לְמַעַל מַעַל בַּיהוָה וְאִשְׁמָה הִנֵּפֶשׁ הַהוּא: ⁷ וְהִתְוַדָּו אֶת־

2. an eruption or a discharge See Lev. 13–15. **corpse** For the rules concerning this impurity, see Num. 19.

3. outside the camp “Outside” differs from “within” in one respect only: It is out of the contamination range of the sanctuary, so that impurities there cannot pollute the sanctuary.

dwell The Lord’s consent to dwell in the tabernacle must be matched by Israel’s scrupulousness in keeping the camp pure. Any impurity in the camp threatens the purity of the tabernacle.

THE ASHAM FOR A FALSE OATH (vv. 5–8)

6. thus breaking faith with the LORD Literally, “whereby he commits sacrilege against the LORD.” The crime consists of defrauding another person and then committing sacrilege against God by denying it in a false oath.

realizes his guilt The feeling of guilt is the necessary requirement for the reduced penalty.

7. confess The penitent’s remorse must be articulated.

that their physical perfection reflected the integrity of their souls. Thus the Torah describes all the Israelites as “standing” at the foot of the mountain, implying that none was crippled; “hearing” the words of God, implying that none was deaf; “seeing” the thunder and lightning, suggesting that none was blind. As they distanced themselves from Sinai and began to grumble about the hardships of the journey, the effect of the miracle began to wear off. Their blemished souls began to be reflected in physically blemished bodies (Num. R. 7:1); note that other Sages were sensitive to the danger of identifying physical infirmity with spiritual impurity.

6. This passage about confession and atonement for theft has prompted sages and commentators to offer several profound and important insights.

any wrong toward a fellow man, thus breaking faith with the LORD Any breach of faith toward another is an offense against God, who commands justice and whose image is found in every human being. Why is the principle of expiation associated here with a case of misappropriation of property? Every breach of faith is a form of theft, stealing another’s trust under false pretenses, using one’s God-given talents for a purpose other than that which God intended (Yitzhak Meir Alter of Ger).

7. he shall confess Hebrew: *hitvadu*; the reflexive mode suggests that we must confess to ourselves the wrong that we have done, rather than go through the motions of an expiation ritual while privately believing we have done nothing wrong. Commentators distinguish between the “confession,” made to cleanse the wrongdoer’s soul, and the “resti-

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

5:7. confess There is no atonement for sins against God without confession of sins. Similarly, when we have injured another human being, the process of return (*t'shuvah*) to the proper path and to good standing before God and the community requires that we first confess our transgression to those whom we have wronged and from whom we ask forgiveness (MT Repentance 2:3,5). See Comment on Deut. 30:2.

done. He shall make restitution in the principal amount and add one-fifth to it, giving it to him whom he has wronged. ⁸If the man has no kinsman to whom restitution can be made, the amount repaid shall go to the LORD for the priest—in addition to the ram of expiation with which expiation is made on his behalf. ⁹So, too, any gift among the sacred donations that the Israelites offer shall be the priest's. ¹⁰And each shall retain his sacred donations: each priest shall keep what is given to him.

חֲטֹאתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ וְהִשִּׁיב אֶת-אֲשָׁמוֹ
בְּרֵאשׁוֹ וְחִמִּישְׁתּוֹ יִסֹּף עָלָיו וְנָתַן לְאִשֶּׁר
אָשָׁם לוֹ: ⁸ וְאִם-אֵין לְאִישׁ גֹּאֵל לְהִשִּׁיב
הָאָשָׁם אֵלָיו הָאָשָׁם הַמּוֹשֵׁב לַיהוָה לִכְהֵן
מִלֶּבֶד אֵיל הַכֹּפְרִים אֲשֶׁר יִכְפְּרֻבוּ עָלָיו:
⁹ וְכֹל-תְּרוּמָה לְכֹל-קֹדְשֵׁי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרִיבוּ לִכְהֵן לוֹ יִהְיֶה: ¹⁰ וְאִישׁ
אֶת-קֹדְשׁוֹ לוֹ יִהְיֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִתֵּן לִכְהֵן
רְבִיעִי לוֹ יִהְיֶה: פ

restitution Hebrew: *asham*; normally the name of a sacrifice. In verses 7 and 8 “*asham*” is used specifically for the restitution paid to the victim.

in the principal amount In its entirety.

one-fifth In Exod. 22:3 and 21:37, the penalty for an apprehended theft is double the value of the stolen article or more. This penalty is sharply reduced to 20 percent here to encourage the voluntary surrender of what was stolen.

whom he has wronged That is, to whom he has incurred liability.

8. kinsman Literally, “redeemer” (*go-el*). The law of redemption is given in Lev. 25:48–49.

go to the LORD for the priest In the absence of a kinsman, the sanctuary is the beneficiary—specifically, the officiating priest, chosen by the offerer. The monetary restitution is added to the reparation of the sacrificial ram to expiate for the

trespass against the Lord. The sacrifice could also be in monetary equivalents.

in addition to The restitution to the defrauded man or his kin precedes the sacrificial restitution to God, as Lev. 5:24–25 makes clear.

ram of expiation Hebrew: *eilha-kippurim*, used here as the name of the sacrifice. The proper name of the sacrifice (*asham*) is not used because the word was already used to denote “restitution” in verse 7.

THE PRIEST OF CHOICE (vv. 9–10)

9. gift Hebrew: *t'rumah*; literally, “that which is lifted” for the sanctuary, i.e., dedicated to it.

10. each That is, each priest. A person who makes a donation to the sanctuary has the right to determine which priest will receive it. The donation must be an item of food; nonperishables cannot become the property of any single priest and would be retained by the sanctuary.

tution,” made to restore the stolen property to its rightful owner. A person found guilty must restore that property even if insisting on innocence.

8. has no kinsman One tradition understands that this refers to a convert to Judaism who has been cheated. (How else would a Jew have no Jewish relatives, however remote?) The *midrash* elaborates on God's love for the convert and on the seriousness of cheating him or her. The convert may have been attracted to the Jewish faith because of its emphasis on social justice. To cheat a fellow Jew is not just a crime but is a breach of faith with God, profaning God's name and robbing someone of the ability to believe in the goodness of God's world and in the decency of one's fellow Jews. The *midrash* offers a parable of the stag that came to graze among the king's flocks of sheep. The king ordered his servants to be especially generous to the stag “for it left its own kind to

come and join my flock” (Num. R. 8:2).

By contrast, Moshe Feinstein suggests that the text refers to a situation in which people persuade themselves that it is not a sin to cheat a wealthy individual who is childless, because he has enough money for himself and has no heirs whose inheritance will be diminished.

to the LORD for the priest The priest is considered a member of every Israelite's family, taking the place here of the nonexistent relatives. Or perhaps this implies that God is kin to every Israelite, including the orphan and the childless.

10. each priest shall keep what is given to him Literally, “what a man gives to the priest shall be his.” This prompted the comment that “his” refers to the donor, not to the priest (BT Ber. 63a). What we keep for ourselves may ultimately be taken from us. Only when we give something away does the gift, and the good deed it represents, become permanently ours.

¹¹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹²Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:

If any man's wife has gone astray and broken faith with him ¹³in that a man has had carnal relations with her unbeknown to her husband, and she keeps secret the fact that she has defiled herself without being forced, and there is no witness against her—¹⁴but a fit of jealousy comes over him and he is wrought up about the wife who has defiled herself; or if a fit of jealousy comes over one and he is wrought up about his wife although she has not defiled herself—¹⁵the man shall bring his wife to the priest. And he shall bring as an offering for her one-tenth of

רביעי ¹¹ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ¹² דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי־תִשְׁטֶה אִשְׁתּוֹ וּמַעַלָּה בּוֹ מַעַל: ¹³ וְשָׁכַב אִישׁ אִתָּהּ שְׁכִבְת־זָרַע וְנִעְלַם מֵעֵינַי אִישָׁהּ וְנִסְתָּרָה וְהָיָה נִטְמָאָה וְעַד אֵין בָּהּ וְהוּא לֹא נִתְפָּשָׁה: ¹⁴ וְעָבַר עָלָיו רוּחַ־קִנְאָה וְקִנְאָה אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהוּא נִטְמָאָה אוֹ־עָבַר עָלָיו רוּחַ־קִנְאָה וְקִנְאָה אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיָה לֹא נִטְמָאָה: ¹⁵ וְהָבִיָא הָאִישׁ אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן וְהָבִיָא אֶת־קִרְבָּנָהּ עָלֶיהָ עֲשִׂירֵת הָאִיפָה

THE SUSPECTED ADULTERESS (vv. 11–31)

An irate husband suspects that his wife has been unfaithful and accuses her of conjugal infidelity. Having no proof, his only recourse is to bring her to the sanctuary where she is subjected to an ordeal.

12. broken faith Hebrew: *ma-alah* . . . *ma-al*, which denotes betrayal. It is often applied to straying after gods. Here it is extended to refer to marital infidelity.

13. unbeknown Literally, “hidden from the eyes of.” The husband was unaware of his wife’s

act or had no proof beyond his own suspicion. *defiled herself* In a moral, not a ritual, sense.

PROCEDURE: OATH, SACRIFICE, AND ORDEAL (vv. 15–26)

15. the man shall bring his wife Only a woman’s husband can press charges, not the community.

for her Because she is under suspicion of being a brazen, unrepentant sinner, she is not qualified to bring her own sacrifice. Hence, her husband brings her offering on her behalf.

11–31. The ordeal of the *sotah*, the woman suspected of betraying her husband, involves a strange and, at first reading, demeaning ritual. At one level, it reflects the immense seriousness with which the Torah regards marital infidelity. “All other transgressions recorded in the Torah can, if committed, be put right. If a man steals, he can return what he stole. If one withholds the wages of a laborer, he can pay him. But one who cohabits with a married woman . . . is unable to restore her marriage to what it was previously” (Num. R. 9:6).

Rashi connects “*sotah*” (literally, “deviant”) to *shoteh* (fool), reflecting the talmudic dictum that “no one sins unless overcome by foolishness” (BT Sot. 3a). If we could clearly see the consequences of what we are tempted to do, we would never sin. People sin, not out of calculation but in a spirit of folly, losing control of their reasoning faculty. The Talmud tells us that the ordeal of the *sotah* worked only in an age when people believed in its power to expose the guilty and exonerate the innocent.

In the more cynical period of the Second Temple, it had to be discontinued (M Sot. 9:9).

14. It would seem that the Sages understood the ordeal of the *sotah* less as a way of ferreting out adulteresses and more as a way of “proving” to the husband that his suspicions were groundless. A man who might not be satisfied with a court’s finding of “not guilty in the absence of proof” would have to accept the judgment of Heaven. Because it is unlikely that the ritual would produce a guilty verdict (unless through the psychosomatic reaction of a truly guilty wife), its purpose may well have been to alleviate the husband’s suspicion and restore domestic harmony.

We can understand the promise of v. 28, that if the woman is found innocent, she will be able to “retain seed,” as foreseeing that she will be restored to a life of love with her husband. But even if the ordeal and a subsequent pregnancy turn the husband’s heart back to his wife, what will it take to restore her trust in him and affection for him?

an *ephah* of barley flour. No oil shall be poured upon it and no frankincense shall be laid on it, for it is a grain offering of jealousy, a grain offering of remembrance which recalls wrongdoing.

¹⁶The priest shall bring her forward and have her stand before the LORD. ¹⁷The priest shall take sacral water in an earthen vessel and, taking some of the earth that is on the floor of the Tabernacle, the priest shall put it into the water. ¹⁸After he has made the woman stand before the LORD, the priest shall bare the woman's head and place upon her hands the grain offering of remembrance, which is a grain offering of jealousy. And in the priest's hands shall be the water of bitterness that induces the spell. ¹⁹The priest shall adjure the woman, saying to her, "If no man has lain with you, if you have not gone astray in defilement while married to your husband, be immune to harm from this water of bitterness that induces the spell. ²⁰But if you have gone astray while married to your husband

קָמַח שְׁעָרִים לֹא-יִצָק עָלָיו שֶׁמֶן וְלֹא-יִתֵן עָלָיו לְבִנָּה פִי-מִנְחַת קְנָאת הוּא * מִנְחַת זְכוּרֹן מִזְכֶּרֶת עֵין:

¹⁶ וְהִקְרִיב אֹתָהּ הַכֹּהֵן וְהִעֲמֶדָהּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: ¹⁷ וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִיָּם קְדָשִׁים בְּכֵלִי-חָרָשׁ וּמִן-הָעֶפֶר אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בְקִרְקַע הַמִּשְׁכָּן יִקַּח הַכֹּהֵן וְנָתַן אֶל-הַמַּיִם: ¹⁸ וְהִעֲמִיד הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הָאִשָּׁה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וּפָרַע אֶת-רֹאשׁ הָאִשָּׁה וְנָתַן עַל-כַּפֶּיהָ אֶת מִנְחַת הַזְכוּרֹן מִנְחַת קְנָאת הוּא וּבִיד הַכֹּהֵן יִהְיוּ מֵי הַמַּרִּים הַמְאָרְרִים: ¹⁹ וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ אֹתָהּ הַכֹּהֵן וְאָמַר אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה אִם-לֹא שָׁכַב אִישׁ אִתָּךְ וְאִם-לֹא שָׁטִית טְמֵאָה תַחַת אִישׁ הַנָּקִי מִמֵּי הַמַּרִּים הַמְאָרְרִים הָאֵלֶּה: ²⁰ וְאִתְּ כִּי שָׁטִית תַּחַת אִישׁ וְכִי נִטְמַאת וַיִּתֵּן אִישׁ בְּךָ אֶת-

v. 15. סבירין ומטעין "היא".

ephah See Comment to Exod. 16:36.

barley flour The grain offering (*minḥah*) normally consisted of fine wheat flour. Neither oil nor frankincense is added, for these ingredients were associated with joy. Their absence signifies that the occasion is one of real or suspected wrongdoing.

which recalls wrongdoing A remembrance offering is always for the benefit of the offerer. Thus the text must add this clause to explain the unusual situation.

16. before the LORD She stands before the altar so that the condemnation she takes upon herself will most certainly be effective.

17. take The items enumerated in this verse were prepared earlier.

sacral water Probably taken from the consecrated basin.

earth . . . on the floor The ground of the sacred area was regarded as having potency.

is Hebrew: *yihyeh*; better: "will be." Because the tabernacle was on the move constantly, the earthen floor could never be the same.

18. bare the woman's head Literally, "loosen the hair." An indication that the woman was in disgrace.

place upon her hands It was her sacrifice, even though her husband brought it, and it was she who had to present it to the priest.

water of bitterness Some attribute this description to the effect of the waters on the woman; others conjecture that a bitter ingredient was added.

20. while married to Hebrew: *tahat*; literally, "under." The idiom refers to the husband's authority.

15. barley flour This usually is food for animals. It is used here because the woman is accused of behaving like an animal, giving in to lustful instinct instead of controlling it (*Sifrei*).

18. water of bitterness The water was not bitter; the bitterness was in the domestic con-

flict that led to the ordeal (*Sifrei*). Making the accused drink the bitter potion recalls Moses forcing a similar drink on those Israelites who had worshiped the Golden Calf (Exod. 32:20), worship understood by the Torah and later tradition as a classic example of unfaithfulness to God (Num. R. 9:49).

and have defiled yourself, if a man other than your husband has had carnal relations with you”—²¹here the priest shall administer the curse of adjuration to the woman, as the priest goes on to say to the woman—“may the LORD make you a curse and an imprecation among your people, as the LORD causes your thigh to sag and your belly to distend; ²²may this water that induces the spell enter your body, causing the belly to distend and the thigh to sag.” And the woman shall say, “Amen, amen!”

²³The priest shall put these curses down in writing and rub it off into the water of bitterness. ²⁴He is to make the woman drink the water of bitterness that induces the spell, so that the spell-inducing water may enter into her to bring on bitterness. ²⁵Then the priest shall take from the woman’s hand the grain offering of jealousy, elevate the grain offering before the LORD, and present it on the altar. ²⁶The priest shall scoop out of the grain offering a token part of it and turn it into smoke on the altar. Last, he shall make the woman drink the water.

21. a curse . . . among your people “All the women will use you in their imprecations; when they curse each other they will say, ‘If you have done such a thing may your end be like that of so-and-so’” (Num. R. 9:18).

as the LORD causes The punishment suffered by the guilty woman is not to be attributed to any inherent magical powers of the water but to the sovereign will of God.

thigh to sag . . . belly to distend There is disagreement among scholars concerning the significance of these symptoms. “Thigh” probably is a euphemism for the procreative organs, and refers here to a miscarriage.

22. Amen Confirms the acceptance of the curse.

23. curses There is only one curse. Perhaps the plural refers to the two symptoms of the pun-

שְׁכַבְתָּו מִבְּלַעְדֵי אִישׁוֹ: ²¹וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ הִכְהֵן אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה בְּשִׁבְעַת הָאֱלֹהִים וְאָמַר הִכְהֵן לְאִשָּׁה יִתֵּן יְהוָה אוֹתָךְ לְאֱלֹהִים וְלִשְׁבַעַה בְּתוֹךְ עַמְּךָ בְּתַת יְהוָה אֶת־יִרְכָךְ נִפְלַת וְאֶת־בִּטְנְךָ צָבָה: ²²וּבָאוּ הַמַּיִם הַמְאָרְרִים הָאֱלֹהִים בְּמַעֲיֶיךָ לְצַבּוֹת בֶּטֶן וְלִנְפֹל יֶרֶךְ וְאָמְרָה הָאִשָּׁה אָמֵן | אָמֵן:

²³וְכָתַב אֶת־הָאֱלֹת הָאֱלֹהִים בְּסֹפֶר וּמָחָה אֶל־מֵי הַמַּרִּים: ²⁴וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה אֶת־מֵי הַמַּרִּים הַמְאָרְרִים וּבָאוּ בָהּ הַמַּיִם הַמְאָרְרִים לְמַרִּים: ²⁵וְלָקַח הִכְהֵן מִיַּד הָאִשָּׁה אֶת מִנְחַת הַקִּנְאָת וְהִנִּיף אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהִקְרִיב אֹתָהּ אֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ²⁶וְקִמַּץ הִכְהֵן מִן־הַמִּנְחָה אֶת־אֶזְכָּרְתָּהּ וְהִקְטִיר הַמִּזְבֵּחַהּ וְאַחֲרַיִשְׁקָה אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה אֶת־הַמַּיִם:

ishment: the sagging thigh and the distended belly. Perhaps it refers to the punishment and its effect, through which she will become an object of derision.

in writing and rub it off into the water This example of sympathetic magic illustrates a belief in the power of the curse when it is written down, read aloud, and then carried out—even in symbolic form.

24. He is to make The offering of the sacrifice precedes the drinking of the potion in verses 25–27; hence this verse anticipates what occurs later.

25. elevate In this special dedicatory rite of elevation offering (*t'nufah*), the offering is brought to the special attention of God before it can be brought to the altar.

23. The commentaries focus on the extraordinary detail that, during the ritual, a document bearing the name of God is dissolved in the potion from which the accused wife drinks. Ordinarily such a document would be considered too holy to destroy, and would have to be

deposited in a proper storage place, a *g'nizah*. “For the sake of peace between husband and wife, God has ordered that the divine name be blotted out” (Num. R. 9:36). After all, “Peace” is considered to be one of God’s names, and the establishment of peace replaces the effaced name.

²⁷Once he has made her drink the water—if she has defiled herself by breaking faith with her husband, the spell-inducing water shall enter into her to bring on bitterness, so that her belly shall distend and her thigh shall sag; and the woman shall become a curse among her people. ²⁸But if the woman has not defiled herself and is pure, she shall be unharmed and able to retain seed.

²⁹This is the ritual in cases of jealousy, when a woman goes astray while married to her husband and defiles herself, ³⁰or when a fit of jealousy comes over a man and he is wrought up over his wife: the woman shall be made to stand before the LORD and the priest shall carry out all this ritual with her. ³¹The man shall be clear of guilt; but that woman shall suffer for her guilt.

וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת-הַמַּיִם וְהִיתָה אִם-נִטְמָאָה²⁷
וְתִמְעַל מֵעַל בְּאִשְׁהָ וּבָאוּ בָּהּ הַמַּיִם
הַמְאָרְרִים לְמַרְיָם וְצִבְתָּהּ בִּטְנָהּ וְנִפְלְאָה
יִרְכָּה וְהִיתָה הָאִשָּׁה לְאֵלָה בְּקָרֵב עַמָּה:
וְאִם-לֹא נִטְמָאָה הָאִשָּׁה וְטִהְרָה הָיָה
וְנִקְתָּה וְנִזְרְעָה זֶרַע:
זֹאת תֹּרַת הַקְּנָאָת אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁטֶה אִשָּׁה²⁹
תַּחַת אִשָּׁה וְנִטְמָאָה: ³⁰אוֹ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר
תִּעְבֹּר עָלָיו רִיחַ קְנָאָה וְקִנְאָת אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ
וְהִעֲמִיד אֶת-הָאִשָּׁה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְעָשָׂה
לָהּ הַכֹּהֵן אֶת כָּל-הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת: ³¹וְנִקְּהָ
הָאִישׁ מֵעוֹן וְהָאִשָּׁה הִיא תִשָּׂא אֶת-
עוֹנָה: פ

6 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²Speak to the Israelites and say to them: If anyone, man

וְיִדְבַר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ²דַּבֵּר
אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אוֹ-

28. pure That is, the waters had no effect.
able to retain seed That is, she will be able to have children, as opposed to the punishment of sterility inflicted on a guilty wife.

29. The ritual allayed the husband's suspicions and restored a harmonious relationship to the family. Note that Yoḥanan ben Zakkai abolished the practice of this ritual, considering it to be one sided (M Sot. 9:9).

31. man That is, the husband.
clear of guilt The husband is free from punishment.

suffer for her guilt The wife must endure her punishment, i.e., the awful consequence of the ordeal-oath.

THE LAW OF THE NAZIRITE (6:1–21)

One becomes a nazirite by means of a vow. This law deals only with a nazirite whose vow is for a limited period, not a lifelong nazirite, like Samson. The temporary nazirite's need for the services of a priest and the sanctuary probably accounts for the addition of this section to the law of the suspected adulteress.

31. The man shall be clear of guilt Hirsch comments, "Only if the husband has never been guilty of unchastity can he impose this ordeal on his wife." God's laws of morality do not give men license to behave immorally in ways forbidden to women.

CHAPTER 6

Opinions are strongly divided concerning the nazirite. Is he or she a saint, aspiring voluntarily to higher levels of holiness, or a person with trouble controlling his or her impulses, who

therefore has to impose limits on behavior beyond what normal people do? Thus Ibn Ezra derives the verb meaning "to utter explicitly" (*yafli*, in v. 2) from *pele* (a wonder). He considered it a wonder that a person could control appetites so completely. The Torah calls for the nazirite to bring a purification offering at the conclusion of the self-imposed period of abstinence. Ramban identifies the sin for which the offering is brought as the nazirite's readiness to return to a less demanding life, "defiling himself with worldly passion." In this view, a com-

or woman, explicitly utters a nazirite's vow, to set himself apart for the LORD,³ he shall abstain from wine and any other intoxicant; he shall not drink vinegar of wine or of any other intoxicant, neither shall he drink anything in which grapes have been steeped, nor eat grapes fresh or dried.⁴ Throughout his term as nazirite, he may not eat anything that is obtained from the grapevine, even seeds or skin.

2. or woman The inclusion of a woman indicates that the nazirite vow was widely practiced. As with all other vows, however, before marriage a woman needed her father's acquiescence, and a married woman needed that of her husband (30:4-9).

explicitly utters Perhaps: "sets [oneself] apart by pronouncing [a vow]." The vow must be spoken aloud.

nazirite Hebrew: *nazir*; from the verb נָזַר (to

אִשָּׁה כִּי יִפְלֹא לְנָדֹר נָזִיר לְהִזְיֹר
לְיִהוּדָה: ³ מִיַּיִן וְשִׁכָר וְזֵיֵר חֹמֶץ יַיִן וְחֹמֶץ
שִׁכָר לֹא יִשְׁתֶּה וְכָל־מִשְׁרַת עֲנָבִים לֹא
יִשְׁתֶּה וְעֲנָבִים לְחִים וְיִבְשִׁים לֹא יֹאכַל:
⁴ כָּל יְמֵי נְזֻרוֹ מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה מִגֶּפֶן
הַיַּיִן מִחֲרָצִימֵי וְעֵדֶגָּ לֹא יֹאכַל:

separate oneself), and related to the verb נָדַר (to take an oath). Only by separating oneself, abstaining from certain acts permitted to all others, can one be totally sanctified to God.

PROHIBITIONS FOR THE NAZIRITE (vv. 3-8)

3. vinegar Wine turned sour, used as food by the poor.

grapes . . . dried Pressed into a cake, raisins were a common food item.

munity is blessed by having in its midst a handful of individuals who commit themselves to a more strenuous religious regimen.

On the other hand, Simon the Just, a high priest in the days of the Second Temple, made it a practice never to eat of the offerings brought by a nazirite. He felt the nazirite's vows were made in a moment of excessive guilt or excessive enthusiasm and, therefore, were not wholehearted (Num. R. 10:7). Maimonides, uncomfortable with the nazirite's extremism, urged the path of moderation in food, drink, and other matters. He cited the words of the Sages, "Is it not sufficient for you to abstain from what the Torah has forbidden, that you seek to forbid yourself other things as well!" Indeed, the talmudic sage Rav taught, "In the World to Come, people will have to account for all the good food God put in the world which they refused to eat" (JT Kid. 4:12). The sin for which the nazirite brings an offering of atonement would then be the sin of seeing the pleasures of God's world as a source of evil and temptation.

We today might feel a similar ambivalence toward the religious enthusiast. We can admire the fervor and readiness to refrain from ordinary pleasures, appreciating the person as a role model of religious seriousness. We can be grateful that there is a place in Judaism for such a person, and yet be concerned with the danger of extremism and fanaticism to which such enthusiasm can sometimes lead.

Astruc offers yet another view, that the nazirite's sin was neither abstinence nor the ending of abstinence, but rather the life of self-indulgence that preceded and led to his or her vow.

Why does the Torah place the laws of the nazirite immediately after the ordeal of the *sotah*? The Midrash suggests that the nazirite-to-be saw a *sotah* commit adultery while she was drunk and realized the power of liquor to lead people into sin (Num. R. 10:1). People with difficulty controlling their impulses may be so upset by the example of another person ruining his or her life by giving in to temptation that they set strenuous limits on themselves, to avoid a similar fate.

3. Why must the nazirite avoid grapes and raisins, which are not intoxicating? This is an instance of "making a fence around the law," establishing a safety zone of prohibition to keep one from approaching the boundary of the forbidden and perhaps inadvertently crossing it. (Thus we begin *Shabbat* by lighting candles 18 minutes before sunset rather than at the moment of sunset, and we avoid carrying money on *Shabbat* lest we find ourselves spending it.) Or the purpose of this rule may be the avoidance of giving others a wrong impression. People who see a nazirite eating grapes might suspect that he or she would drink grape wine as well. "Avoid unseemliness and the appearance of unseemliness" (Num. R. 10:8).

⁵Throughout the term of his vow as nazirite, no razor shall touch his head; it shall remain consecrated until the completion of his term as nazirite of the LORD, the hair of his head being left to grow untrimmed. ⁶Throughout the term that he has set apart for the LORD, he shall not go in where there is a dead person. ⁷Even if his father or mother, or his brother or sister should die, he must not defile himself for them, since hair set apart for his God is upon his head: ⁸throughout his term as nazirite he is consecrated to the LORD.

⁹If a person dies suddenly near him, defiling his consecrated hair, he shall shave his head on the day he becomes pure; he shall shave it on the seventh day. ¹⁰On the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two pigeons to the priest, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. ¹¹The priest shall offer one as a purification

כָּל־יְמֵי נְדָר נְזִירוֹ תֵעָר לֹא־יַעֲבֹר עַל־
 רֹאשׁוֹ עַד־מְלֵאת הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר־יִזְיֹר לַיהוָה
 קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה גְדָל פְּרַע שְׂעָר רֹאשׁוֹ: ⁶ כָּל־
 יְמֵי הַזְּיָרוֹ לַיהוָה עַל־נַפְשׁ מֵת לֹא יָבֵא:
⁷ לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ לְאָחִיו וּלְאָחֹתוֹ לֹא־
 יִטְמָא לָהֶם בְּמָתָם כִּי נִזְר אֱלֹהָיו עַל־
 רֹאשׁוֹ: ⁸ כָּל יְמֵי נְזִרוֹ קֹדֶשׁ הוּא לַיהוָה:
⁹ וְכִי־יָמוּת מֵת עָלָיו בַּפֶּתַע פְּתָאֵם וְטָמֵא
 רֹאשׁ נְזִרוֹ וּגְלַח רֹאשׁוֹ בַּיּוֹם טְהַרְתּוּ בַּיּוֹם
 הַשְּׁבִיעִי יְגַלְחֵנוּ: ¹⁰ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יָבֵא
 שְׁתֵּי תְרִים אוֹ שְׁנֵי בָנִי יוֹנָה אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן
 אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ¹¹ וַעֲשֶׂה הַכֹּהֵן

5. shall touch Literally, “shall pass over.” Not only shaving is prohibited but any form of trimming.

it That is, the hair. The nazirite’s most distinctive trait is uncut hair.

6. go in Defilement results from being under the same roof as the corpse.

8. consecrated The above restrictions have the sole function of consecrating the nazirite, who is thus endowed with a status equivalent to priesthood.

CONTAMINATION BY CORPSE (vv. 9–12)

9. The ordinary person is contaminated by a corpse only through direct contact or being under the same roof; the nazirite is contaminated merely by being in its proximity.

suddenly The occurrence was accidental. Indeed, if the contamination had been deliberate, sacrificial expiation would be impossible.

near Such is the added power of the nazirite’s holiness that he or she contracts impurity at a distance.

defiling . . . consecrated hair Only the hair is permanently sanctified, in contrast to the person, which is desanctified at the termination of one’s vow.

shave . . . head The shaved hair was buried, probably to prevent it from polluting other objects.

shave it on the seventh day After having been sprinkled on the third and seventh days with the purificatory waters.

10. turtledoves . . . pigeons The most inexpensive animal offerings.

7. A *kohen* may attend to the funerals of his parents because his priestly status derives from them. Because a nazirite’s status is self-imposed, however, he may not do so. Perhaps the real significance of the institution of the nazirite is found in giving troubled, self-doubting people a way of dealing with their upsetting thoughts and impulses within a religious framework. It turns those thoughts to the service of God instead of allowing them to become a source of discomfort and guilt. A

commentator asks why some people can drink wine while others cannot. His answer: Wine lays bare the inner essence of a person’s soul. The pure of heart can drink and not worry about what will be revealed, but those who are struggling against their lower instincts would do well to avoid strong drink lest their unseemly side be exposed. The normative view of Judaism is that nothing created by God, including wine, sex, and wealth, is intrinsically evil. All can be sanctified if used properly.

offering and the other as a burnt offering, and make expiation on his behalf for the guilt that he incurred through the corpse. That same day he shall reconsecrate his head¹² and rededicate to the LORD his term as nazirite; and he shall bring a lamb in its first year as a reparation offering. The previous period shall be void, since his consecrated hair was defiled.

¹³This is the ritual for the nazirite: On the day that his term as nazirite is completed, he shall be brought to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁴As his offering to the LORD he shall present: one male lamb in its first year, without blemish, for a burnt offering; one ewe lamb in its first year, without blemish, for a purification offering; one ram without blemish for an offering of well-being; ¹⁵a basket of unleavened cakes of choice flour with oil mixed in, and unleavened wafers spread with oil; and the proper grain offerings and libations.

¹⁶The priest shall present them before the LORD and offer the purification offering and the burnt offering. ¹⁷He shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of well-being to the LORD, together with the basket of unleavened cakes; the priest shall also offer the grain offerings and the libations. ¹⁸The nazirite shall then shave his consecrated hair, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and take the locks of his consecrated

11. burnt offering The burnt offering was added when birds had been brought, to provide an adequate gift for the altar (Ibn Ezra, Ramban).

12. rededicate to the LORD Presumably by a new vow.

penalty offering Before it can be acceptable to God, the nazirite must replace the consecrated hair that has been shaven as well as repeat the preceding nazirite period that had been canceled. Total restitution has been rendered only after he or she reconsecrates the new hair and renews the vow. Then, and only then, can the priest proceed with the reparation offering in the hope of achieving divine forgiveness.

THE COMPLETION RITUAL (vv. 13–21)

14. The animal offerings for both the completed

אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת וְאֶחָד לְעֹלָה וְכֹפֶר עָלָיו
מֵאֲשֶׁר חָטָא עַל־הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְקִדַּשׁ אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא: ¹² וְהִזִּיר לַיהוָה אֶת־יְמֵי נִזְרוֹ
וְהֵבִיא כֶּבֶשׂ בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְאֲשֶׁם וְהִזְמִים
הָרֵאשֹׁנִים יִפְלוּ בִּי טָמֵא נִזְרוֹ:

¹³ וְזֹאת תּוֹרַת הַנִּזְזִיר בַּיּוֹם מְלֵאת יְמֵי
נִזְרוֹ יָבִיא אֹתוֹ אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:
¹⁴ וְהִקְרִיב אֶת־קָרְבָּנוֹ לַיהוָה כֶּבֶשׂ בֶּן־
שָׁנָתוֹ תָמִים אֶחָד לְעֹלָה וְכִבְשֶׁה אֶחָד
בֶּת־שָׁנָתָה תָמִימָה לְחֻטָּאת וְאֵיל־אֶחָד
תָּמִים לְשִׁלְמִים: ¹⁵ וְסֹל מִצּוֹת סֹלֶת חֲלֹת
בְּלוֹלֹת בְּשֶׁמֶן וּרְקִיקֵי מִצּוֹת מְשֻׁחִים
בְּשֶׁמֶן וּמִנְחָתָם וְנִסְכֵיהֶם:

¹⁶ וְהִקְרִיב הַכֹּהֵן לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וַעֲשֶׂה אֶת־
חֻטָּאתוֹ וְאֶת־עֹלָתוֹ: ¹⁷ וְאֶת־הָאֵיל יַעֲשֶׂה
זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה עַל סֹל הַמִּצּוֹת וַעֲשֶׂה
הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־מִנְחָתוֹ וְאֶת־נִסְכּוֹ: ¹⁸ וְגִלַּח
הַנִּזְזִיר פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד אֶת־רֹאשׁ נִזְרוֹ

and the abortive nazirite periods are the same, with this major difference: The *asham* for desecration has been replaced here by the *sh'lamim* for joy.

15. cakes Distinct from wafers, the other grain offering in the basket.

17. cakes Not offered as sacrifice but only presented and then eaten by the priest and the nazirite. The purpose of their presentation, probably by setting the basket before the altar, is to sanctify them.

18. then Only after all the sacrifices have been offered up on the altar may the nazirite shave his or her consecrated hair.

at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting Between the entrance and the altar, the area permitted to lay worshippers when they brought their offerings.

hair and put them on the fire that is under the sacrifice of well-being.

¹⁹The priest shall take the shoulder of the ram when it has been boiled, one unleavened cake from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and place them on the hands of the nazirite after he has shaved his consecrated hair. ²⁰The priest shall elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD; and this shall be a sacred donation for the priest, in addition to the breast of the elevation offering and the thigh of gift offering. After that the nazirite may drink wine.

²¹Such is the obligation of a nazirite; except that he who vows an offering to the LORD of what he can afford, beyond his nazirite requirements, must do exactly according to the vow that he has made beyond his obligation as a nazirite.

fire that is under The hair was burned in the special hearth set up under the pot to cook the sacrifice of well-being. Because the hair is holy even after it is shaved, it must be destroyed by fire. Its destruction prevents its defilement.

sacrifice of well-being The meat of this sacrifice belonged to the worshiper; it was cooked and eaten in the sacred precincts.

19. shoulder According to the Sages, the upper part of the right foreleg is apportioned to the priest from every offering of well-being.

one unleavened cake from the basket The basket had been set down before the Lord, probably by the altar (Deut. 26:4,10). Its contents, except for the set of offerings belonging to the priest, will be eaten by the nazirite together with the well-being offering.

hands Literally, “palms.”

20. The “elevation offering” (*t'nufah*) is a rite of dedication that transfers the elevated objects from the property of the offerer to God. That is why all the portions given to the priests are first placed on the palms of the donor, to indicate that they are his or hers to donate. Then the elevation

וּלְקַח אֶת־שֵׁעַר רֹאשׁ נְזִירוֹ וְנָתַן עַל־הָאֵשׁ
אֲשֶׁר־תַּחַת זֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים:

¹⁹ וּלְקַח הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַזֵּרֵעַ בְּשִׁלְהָ מִן־
הָאֵיל וְחֵלֶת מִצָּה אַחַת מִן־הַסֹּל וּרְקִיק
מִצָּה אֶחָד וְנָתַן עַל־כַּפְּי הַנְּזִיר אַחַר
הַתְּגַלְחוֹ אֶת־נְזִירוֹ: ²⁰ וְהִנִּיף אוֹתָם הַכֹּהֵן |
תְּנוּפָה לְפָנָי יְהוָה קֹדֶשׁ הוּא לְכֹהֵן עַל
חֲזֵה הַתְּנוּפָה וְעַל שׁוֹק הַתְּרוּמָה וְאַחַר
יִשְׁתֶּה הַנְּזִיר יַיִן:

²¹ זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַנְּזִיר אֲשֶׁר יִדֹּר קִרְבָּנוֹ
לַיהוָה עַל־נְזִירוֹ מִלֵּבַד אֲשֶׁר־תִּשְׁיֵג יָדוֹ
כַּפֵּי נְדָרוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִדֹּר כֵּן יַעֲשֶׂה עַל תּוֹרַת
נְזִירוֹ: פ

movement is performed by the priest, probably by placing his hands under the hands of the donor, thereby graphically transferring the objects to God, after which they may be eaten by the priest.

21. The sacrifices enumerated above are the minimum due. The nazirite who vows additional offerings must fulfill that vow as well.

APPENDIX: THE PRIESTLY BLESSING

(vv. 22–27)

Among the chief duties of the priest is to bless the people Israel in the name of the Lord. The blessing, however, issues solely from the Lord; the priest's function is to channel it. The text underscores the fact that the priest possesses no divine powers of his own, although he is holy—indeed, one of God's intimates. Of special interest is the fact that the text of the priestly blessing has been found on silver amulets (dating from the late 7th century B.C.E.) southeast of the City of David, at Ketef Hinnom, on the western rise of the Valley of Hinnom. It is the only known inscription with a biblical text that predates the Babylonian exile.

22–27. These six verses contain perhaps the most familiar words in the Book of Numbers. In many traditional synagogues, descendants of the *kohanim* pronounce these words on festivals as a blessing of the congregation. In their capacity as modern equivalents of *ko-*

hanim, rabbis and cantors commonly invoke it for a *bar mitzvah* or *bat mitzvah*, for a bride and groom, or as the closing benediction of a service. Parents use it to bless their children on *Shabbat* eve.

Do human beings have the power to bless

22The LORD spoke to Moses: 23Speak to Aaron and his sons: Thus shall you bless the people of Israel. Say to them:

24The LORD bless you and protect you!

25The LORD deal kindly and graciously with you!

26The LORD bestow His favor upon you and grant you peace!

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 23
אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו לֵאמֹר כֹּה תְבָרְכוּ
אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָמַר לָהֶם: ס
יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׂמְרֶךָ: 24
יְיָר יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֶךָ: ס
יִשָּׂא יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לָךְ
שְׁלוֹם: ס

23. *Thus* That is, when you bless, use this formula, not one of your own devising.

to them To the assembled worshippers, indicating the communal nature of the blessing.

24. *The LORD* Understood as “May the LORD” (and so in vv. 25–26).

bless In the Bible, God’s blessing confers mainly tangible gifts: offspring, cattle and flocks, silver and gold, land, fertility, health, victory, strength, and peace.

protect That is, from harmful spirits and from all forms of evil.

25. *deal kindly* Literally, “make His face to shine,” i.e., illumine. The Hebrew expression indicates God’s friendly concern.

graciously The root חנן is used exclusively in connection with divine mercy and grace. God’s strict justice will be tempered by mercy. God will not judge the people Israel according to their sins but will deal kindly with them as a free gift.

26. *peace* Hebrew: *shalom*, encompassing the blessings of prosperity, good health, friendship, and well-being.

other human beings? Ishmael (BT Hūl. 49a) teaches that the priests do indeed bless the people; and as a reward, God blesses the priests (taking the object in “I will bless them” in v. 27 to be the priests). The *Tanḥuma* suggests that when the priests aspire to bless the people, God endorses their efforts and joins in, making their blessing authentic. Rashbam, however, interprets the verse to mean that when the priests invoke God’s blessing (“they shall link My name with the people”), God responds by blessing the people Israel. The blessing is structured in three lines (vv. 24–26), each slightly longer than the preceding one: in Hebrew, three words, then five words, then seven words, with the divine name occurring as the second word in each line.

bless you May “the LORD bless you” with material wealth “and protect you” from losing that wealth, for material blessings are vulnerable to loss (*Sifrei*). Or “may God protect you from being corrupted by the attainment of material blessing” (Num. R. 11:5). “May God bless

you according to your needs—blessing the student with intelligence, the merchant with business acumen” (*Ha-amek Davar*). Sforno notes that Jews need not be embarrassed to pray for material wealth, which can make a life of charity and study more attainable.

deal kindly Literally, “make His face shine.” Hirsch and Sforno render it “May God enlighten you,” so that you can understand the purposes God has in mind for you. For the *Sifrei*, this second line of the blessing is a prayer for the light of wisdom and the knowledge of Torah. Unlike wealth, they require no protection to prevent their being stolen.

graciously May God give you the gift of grace. May you live in a society where people will admire you for your devotion to God and to Torah.

bestow . . . favor Literally, “to turn one’s head in your direction.” In Gen. 19:21, it means to grant someone’s request. In Gen. 40:19, it means “to forgive, to look upon someone with favor.” In that sense, the third line of the bles-

HALAKHAH L’MA’ASEH

6:23. *Thus shall you bless the people of Israel* In the ancient Temple, the *kohanim* (priests) blessed the people with this blessing daily. Today it is included in the reader’s repetition of the *Amidah* during *Shaharit* and *Musaf* throughout the year. In many synagogues in the Diaspora the *kohanim* re-enact the ancient blessing during the *Musaf* service on High Holy Days and festivals. According to common practice in Israel, *kohanim* bless the congregation each day. Following one of the two contrary responsa approved by the CJLS on this subject, some Conservative congregations permit and some forbid the daughter of a *kohen* to serve in this role. See Comment on Lev. 22:12.

²⁷Thus they shall link My name with the people of Israel, and I will bless them.

וְשָׂמוּ אֶת־שְׁמִי עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲנִי אֲבָרְכֵם: פ

7 On the day that Moses finished setting up the Tabernacle, he anointed and consecrated it and all its furnishings, as well as the altar and its utensils. When he had anointed and consecrated them, ²the chieftains of Israel, the heads of ancestral houses, namely, the chieftains of the tribes, those who were in charge of enrollment,

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם בְּלוֹת מֹשֶׁה לְהִקְיֵם אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן וַיִּמְשַׁח אֹתוֹ וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־כָּל־כֵּלָיו וְאֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְאֶת־כָּל־כֵּלָיו וַיִּמְשָׁחֵם וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתָם: ² וַיִּקְרִיבוּ נְשִׂאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רָאשֵׁי בֵּית אֲבוֹתָם הֵם נְשִׂאֵי הַמִּטֵּת הֵם הָעֹמְדִים עַל־הַפְּקָדִים: חמישי

27. link My name with God's name is figuratively "placed" on the Israelites by the priests through the medium of the benediction.

and I Literally, "I Myself." The Hebrew is emphatic, stressing that the Lord is the sole source of the blessing.

FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR USE OF THE TABERNACLE (7:1–8:26)

THE CHIEFTAINS' INITIATORY GIFTS (7:1–89)

The 12 tribal chieftains collectively contribute valuable gifts to the completed and consecrated tabernacle. Then, individually and on

successive days, each chieftain contributes an additional identical gift to the consecrated altar.

1. as well as the altar The altar is singled out because it will receive separate dedicatory gifts from the chieftains (Ibn Ezra).

sing expresses the hope that God will heed the Israelites' prayers and forgive their shortcomings. In Deut. 10:17, the phrase carries the meaning of favoring one person over another, which God is described as not doing; so here the blessing might be taken to mean, "May God side with you and give you the benefit of any doubt."

grant you peace Peace begins in the home, then extends to the community, and finally to all the world (*K'tav Sofer*). The Midrash asks why God should bless and forgive Israel. "Because Israel blesses and forgives God!" We bless God when we have eaten a satisfying meal and recite the Blessings after Meals (*Birkat ha-Mazon*). We forgive God when we do not have enough to eat, consuming perhaps only one slice of bread, yet recite *Birkat ha-Mazon* nonetheless, thanking God for our food (Num. R. 11:7). Note that *Birkat ha-Mazon*, the *Amidah*, the *Kaddish*, and the Mishnah all conclude with a prayer for peace.

CHAPTER 7

2. chieftains of Israel Who were these chieftains? They had been foremen during

the days of Egyptian enslavement, and willingly accepted beatings from their Egyptian taskmasters rather than punish their fellow Israelites for not meeting their quotas of bricks. As a reward, they were honored to bring these inaugural offerings (Num. R. 12:16). Although each offering was identical, each was unique to the person who brought it. The order of the tribes seems random, implying no greater status to those who came first. To each tribe, God dedicated one day, and on that day there was no gift like its gift. The sincerity of each offering was in no way diminished by the fact that another chieftain had brought an identical offering one day earlier. For that reason, the Torah describes each offering in detail. Similarly, although people recite the same prayers, each worshiper's experience of those prayers is unique and personal.

The Midrash states that on the day the tabernacle was dedicated, something happened that never had happened before. The *Sh'khinah*, the Presence of God, descended from heaven and took up residence in this world (Num. R. 12:6).

drew near³ and brought their offering before the LORD: six draught carts and twelve oxen, a cart for every two chieftains and an ox for each one.

When they had brought them before the Tabernacle, ⁴the LORD said to Moses: ⁵Accept these from them for use in the service of the Tent of Meeting, and give them to the Levites according to their respective services.

⁶Moses took the carts and the oxen and gave them to the Levites. ⁷Two carts and four oxen he gave to the Gershonites, as required for their service, ⁸and four carts and eight oxen he gave to the Merarites, as required for their service—under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest. ⁹But to the Kohathites he did not give any; since theirs was the service of the [most] sacred objects, their portage was by shoulder.

¹⁰The chieftains also brought the dedication offering for the altar upon its being anointed. As the chieftains were presenting their offerings before the altar, ¹¹the LORD said to Moses: Let them present their offerings for the dedication of the altar, one chieftain each day.

¹²The one who presented his offering on the first day was Nahshon son of Amminadab of the tribe of Judah. ¹³His offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70

³וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת־קָרְבָּנָם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה שֵׁשׁ־עֲגָלוֹת צֶבֶד וּשְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר בָּקָר עֲגָלָה עַל־שְׁנַיִם הַנְּשָׂאִים וְשׁוֹר לְאֶחָד

וַיִּקְרִיבוּ אוֹתָם לִפְנֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן: ⁴וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ⁵קַח מֵאֹתָם וְהָיוּ לְעֵבֶד אֶת־עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְנִתְּנָה אוֹתָם אֶל־הַלְוִיִּם אִישׁ כְּפִי עֲבֹדָתוֹ:

⁶וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הָעֲגָלוֹת וְאֶת־הַבָּקָר וַיִּתֵּן אוֹתָם אֶל־הַלְוִיִּם: ⁷אֶת אֶת שְׁתֵּי הָעֲגָלוֹת וְאֶת אַרְבַּעַת הַבָּקָר נָתַן לְבְנֵי גֵרְשׁוֹן כְּפִי עֲבֹדָתָם: ⁸וְאֶת אַרְבַּע הָעֲגָלוֹת וְאֶת שְׁמֹנֶת הַבָּקָר נָתַן לְבְנֵי מֵרָרִי כְּפִי עֲבֹדָתָם בְּיַד אִיתָמָר בֶּן־אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן: ⁹וּלְבְנֵי קָהָת לֹא נָתַן כִּי־עֲבֹדַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ עֲלֵיהֶם בְּכַתֵּף יִשְׂאוּ:

¹⁰וַיִּקְרִיבוּ הַנְּשָׂאִים אֶת חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בְּיוֹם הַמִּשְׁחָ אֹתוֹ וַיִּקְרִיבוּ הַנְּשָׂאִים אֶת־קָרְבָּנָם לִפְנֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ¹¹וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה נְשִׂיא אֶחָד לְיוֹם נְשִׂיא אֶחָד לְיוֹם יִקְרִיבוּ אֶת־קָרְבָּנָם לְחֻנֻּכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: ס

¹²וַיְהִי הַמַּקְרִיב בְּיוֹם הָרֵאשׁוֹן אֶת־קָרְבָּנוֹ נַחֲשׁוֹן בֶּן־עַמִּינָדָב לְמִטֵּה יְהוּדָה: ¹³וְקָרְבָּנוֹ קַעֲרַת־כֶּסֶף אֶחָת שְׁלֹשִׁים

3. draught carts Wagons strong enough to carry heavy loads. Each draught cart requires the power of two oxen.

before the Tabernacle Neither the wood of the carts nor their animals were destined for the altar. Hence, they were ineligible to enter the sacred area, which was reserved for sacrifice alone.

7–8. The planks of the tabernacle carried by the Merarites were bulkier than the tabernacle curtains carried by the Gershonites. Therefore, the Merarites were given four carts, and the Gershonites, two carts.

10. dedication offering This actually was an initiation offering, gifts brought upon initiating the use of a structure.

13. offering Hebrew: *korban*, which applies here both to the vessels and to the animals enumerated in the list.

shekels See Comment to Gen. 23:9.

bowl . . . basin The bowls were probably used for dry ingredients, such as flour. The basins were probably used for liquids, such as libations and blood. These bowls and basins were also filled with semolina flour mixed with oil.

9. their portage was by shoulder This description of the Levites' physical labor should teach us that "one does not acquire the least spark of holiness without effort" (Menaḥem Mendel of Kotzk).

shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ¹⁴one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ¹⁵one bull of the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ¹⁶one goat for a purification offering; ¹⁷and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Nahshon son of Amminadab.

¹⁸On the second day, Nethanel son of Zuar, chieftain of Issachar, made his offering. ¹⁹He presented as his offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70 shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ²⁰one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ²¹one bull of the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ²²one goat for a purification offering; ²³and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Nethanel son of Zuar.

²⁴On the third day, it was the chieftain of the Zebulunites, Eliab son of Helon. ²⁵His offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70 shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ²⁶one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ²⁷one bull of the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ²⁸one goat for a purification offering; ²⁹and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five year-

וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזֶּרֶק אֶחָד זָסָף שְׁבַעִים
שָׁקֶל בְּשָׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם | מִלְּאִים סֶלֶת
בְּלוּלָה בַשֶּׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה: ¹⁴ כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה
זָהָב מְלֵאָה קִטְרֶת: ¹⁵ פֶּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר
אֵיל אֶחָד כֶּבֶשׂ־אֶחָד בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה:
שְׁעִיר־עִזִּים אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת: ¹⁷ וּלְזִבַּח
הַשְּׁלָמִים בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה
עֲתוּדִים חֲמִשָּׁה כֶּבֶשִׁים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה
זֶה קָרְבַּן נִחְשׁוֹן בֶּן־עַמִּינָדָב: פ
¹⁸ בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי הַקָּרִיב נִתְנָאֵל בֶּן־צוּעַר
נָשִׂיא יִשָּׁשְׁכָר: ¹⁹ הַקָּרֵב אֶת־קָרְבָּנוֹ
קַעֲרֶת־כֶּסֶף אַחַת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ
מִזֶּרֶק אֶחָד זָסָף שְׁבַעִים שָׁקֶל בְּשָׁקֶל
הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם | מִלְּאִים סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה
בַשֶּׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה: ²⁰ כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב
מְלֵאָה קִטְרֶת: ²¹ פֶּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל
אֶחָד כֶּבֶשׂ־אֶחָד בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה:
שְׁעִיר־עִזִּים אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת: ²³ וּלְזִבַּח
הַשְּׁלָמִים בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה
עֲתוּדִים חֲמִשָּׁה כֶּבֶשִׁים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה
זֶה קָרְבַּן נִתְנָאֵל בֶּן־צוּעַר: פ
²⁴ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי נָשִׂיא לְבָנֵי זְבוּלֹן אֱלִיאָב
בֶּן־חֵלֹן: ²⁵ קָרְבָּנוֹ קַעֲרֶת־כֶּסֶף אַחַת
שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזֶּרֶק אֶחָד זָסָף
שְׁבַעִים שָׁקֶל בְּשָׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם |
מִלְּאִים סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בַשֶּׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה:
²⁶ כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב מְלֵאָה קִטְרֶת:
²⁷ פֶּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל אֶחָד כֶּבֶשׂ־אֶחָד
בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה: ²⁸ שְׁעִיר־עִזִּים אֶחָד
לְחֻטָּאת: ²⁹ וּלְזִבַּח הַשְּׁלָמִים בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם
אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה עֲתוּדִים חֲמִשָּׁה כֶּבֶשִׁים

14. 10 shekels Although the ladle was made of gold, its weight was computed in terms of standard silver shekels.

incense For use on the altar of incense (see Exod. 30:7).

15. bull of the herd A domestic bull. Wild animals are barred from the altar.

16. one goat A domestic goat.

17. oxen Better: bulls. Castrated animals are forbidden in sacrifice (Lev. 22:20).

ling lambs. That was the offering of Eliab son of Helon.

³⁰On the fourth day, it was the chieftain of the Reubenites, Elizur son of Shedeur. ³¹His offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70 shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ³²one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ³³one bull of the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ³⁴one goat for a purification offering; ³⁵and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Elizur son of Shedeur.

³⁶On the fifth day, it was the chieftain of the Simeonites, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai. ³⁷His offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70 shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ³⁸one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ³⁹one bull of the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ⁴⁰one goat for a purification offering; ⁴¹and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.

⁴²On the sixth day, it was the chieftain of the Gadites, Eliasaph son of Deuel. ⁴³His offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70 shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ⁴⁴one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ⁴⁵one bull of the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ⁴⁶one goat for a purification offering; ⁴⁷and for his sacrifice of well-being:

בְּנֵי־שֵׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה זֶה קָרְבַּן אֱלִיאָב בֶּן־חֵלֹן: פ

³⁰בַּיּוֹם הַרְבִּיעִי נָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי רְאוּבֵן אֱלִיזוּר בֶּן־שְׁדֵיאוּר: ³¹קָרְבָּנוֹ קַעֲרַת־כֶּסֶף אַחַת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזְרָק אַחַד כֶּסֶף שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם | מְלֵאִים סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה: ³²כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב מְלֵאָה קְטֹרֶת: ³³פָּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל אֶחָד כֶּבֶשׂ־אֶחָד בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה: ³⁴שְׁעִיר־עִזִּים אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת: ³⁵וּלְזִבַּח הַשְּׁלָמִים בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה עֶתְדִים חֲמִשָּׁה כֶּבֶשִׁים בְּנֵי־שֵׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה זֶה קָרְבַּן אֱלִיזוּר בֶּן־שְׁדֵיאוּר: פ

³⁶בַּיּוֹם הַחֲמִישִׁי נָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי שִׁמְעוֹן שְׁלֻמִּיאֵל בֶּן־צוּרִישַׁדַּי: ³⁷קָרְבָּנוֹ קַעֲרַת־כֶּסֶף אַחַת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזְרָק אַחַד כֶּסֶף שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם | מְלֵאִים סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה: ³⁸כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב מְלֵאָה קְטֹרֶת: ³⁹פָּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל אֶחָד כֶּבֶשׂ־אֶחָד בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה: ⁴⁰שְׁעִיר־עִזִּים אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת ⁴¹וּלְזִבַּח הַשְּׁלָמִים בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה עֶתְדִים חֲמִשָּׁה כֶּבֶשִׁים בְּנֵי־שֵׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה זֶה קָרְבַּן שְׁלֻמִּיאֵל בֶּן־צוּרִישַׁדַּי: פ

⁴²בַּיּוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי נָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי גַד אֱלִיאֶסָף בֶּן־דְּעוּאֵל: ⁴³קָרְבָּנוֹ קַעֲרַת־כֶּסֶף אַחַת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזְרָק אַחַד כֶּסֶף שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם | מְלֵאִים סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה: ⁴⁴כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב מְלֵאָה קְטֹרֶת: ⁴⁵פָּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל אֶחָד כֶּבֶשׂ־אֶחָד בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה: ⁴⁶שְׁעִיר־עִזִּים אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת: ⁴⁷וּלְזִבַּח הַשְּׁלָמִים בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם

two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Eliasaph son of Deuel.

⁴⁸On the seventh day, it was the chieftain of the Ephraimites, Elishama son of Ammihud. ⁴⁹His offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70 shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ⁵⁰one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ⁵¹one bull of the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ⁵²one goat for a purification offering; ⁵³and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Elishama son of Ammihud.

⁵⁴On the eighth day, it was the chieftain of the Manassites, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur. ⁵⁵His offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70 shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ⁵⁶one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ⁵⁷one bull of the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ⁵⁸one goat for a purification offering; ⁵⁹and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.

⁶⁰On the ninth day, it was the chieftain of the Benjaminites, Abidan son of Gideoni. ⁶¹His offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70 shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ⁶²one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ⁶³one bull of the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ⁶⁴one goat for a purification

אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה עֶתְדִים חֲמִשָּׁה כִּבְשִׁים
בְּנֵי־שֵׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה זֶה קָרְבַּן אֱלִיָּסָף בֶּן־
דְּעוּאֵל: פ

⁴⁸ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי נָשִׂיא לְבִנֵי אֶפְרַיִם
אֱלִישָׁמַע בֶּן־עַמִּיהוּד: ⁴⁹ קָרְבָּנוֹ קְעֶרֶת־
כֶּסֶף אַחַת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזְרָק
אֶחָד כֶּסֶף שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ
שְׁנֵיהֶם | מְלֵאִים סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן
לְמִנְחָה: ⁵⁰ כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב מְלֵאָה
קִטְרֶת: ⁵¹ פָּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל אֶחָד
כִּבְש־אֶחָד בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה: ⁵² שְׁעִיר־
עֲזִים אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת: ⁵³ וּלְזִבַּח הַשְּׁלָמִים
בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה עֶתְדִים חֲמִשָּׁה
כִּבְשִׁים בְּנֵי־שֵׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה זֶה קָרְבַּן
אֱלִישָׁמַע בֶּן־עַמִּיהוּד: פ

⁵⁴ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי נָשִׂיא לְבִנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה
גַּמְלִיאֵל בֶּן־פְּדָה־צוּר: ⁵⁵ קָרְבָּנוֹ קְעֶרֶת־
כֶּסֶף אַחַת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזְרָק
אֶחָד כֶּסֶף שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ
שְׁנֵיהֶם | מְלֵאִים סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן
לְמִנְחָה: ⁵⁶ כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב מְלֵאָה
קִטְרֶת: ⁵⁷ פָּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל אֶחָד
כִּבְש־אֶחָד בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה: ⁵⁸ שְׁעִיר־
עֲזִים אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת: ⁵⁹ וּלְזִבַּח הַשְּׁלָמִים
בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה עֶתְדִים חֲמִשָּׁה
כִּבְשִׁים בְּנֵי־שֵׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה זֶה קָרְבַּן
גַּמְלִיאֵל בֶּן־פְּדָה־צוּר: פ

⁶⁰ בַּיּוֹם הַתְּשִׁיעִי נָשִׂיא לְבִנֵי בְנִימִן אַבִּידָן
בֶּן־גִּדְעֹנִי: ⁶¹ קָרְבָּנוֹ קְעֶרֶת־כֶּסֶף אַחַת
שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזְרָק אֶחָד כֶּסֶף
שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם |
מְלֵאִים סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה:
⁶² כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב מְלֵאָה קִטְרֶת:
⁶³ פָּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל אֶחָד כִּבְש־אֶחָד
בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה: ⁶⁴ שְׁעִיר־עֲזִים אֶחָד

offering; ⁶⁵and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Abidan son of Gideoni.

⁶⁶On the tenth day, it was the chieftain of the Danites, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai. ⁶⁷His offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70 shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ⁶⁸one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ⁶⁹one bull of the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ⁷⁰one goat for a purification offering; ⁷¹and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

⁷²On the eleventh day, it was the chieftain of the Asherites, Pagiel son of Ochrán. ⁷³His offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70 shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ⁷⁴one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ⁷⁵one bull of the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ⁷⁶one goat for a purification offering; ⁷⁷and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Pagiel son of Ochrán.

⁷⁸On the twelfth day, it was the chieftain of the Naphtalites, Ahira son of Enan. ⁷⁹His offering: one silver bowl weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of 70 shekels by the sanctuary weight, both filled with choice flour with oil mixed in, for a grain offering; ⁸⁰one gold ladle of 10 shekels, filled with incense; ⁸¹one bull of

לְחִטָּאת: ⁶⁵וּלְזֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה עֶתְדִים חֲמִשָּׁה כְּבָשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה זֶה קָרְבַּן אַבִּידָן בֶּן־גִּדְעָנִי: פ

⁶⁶בַּיּוֹם הָעֲשִׂירִי נָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי דָן אַחִיעֶזֶר בֶּן־עַמִּישַׁדַּי: ⁶⁷קָרְבָּנוֹ קִעְרַת־כֶּסֶף אַחַת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזֶּרֶק אֶחָד כֶּסֶף שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם | מְלֵאִים סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה: ⁶⁸כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב מְלֵאָה קִטְרֶת: ⁶⁹פָּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל אֶחָד כְּבֶשֶׂת־אֶחָד בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה: ⁷⁰שְׁעִיר־עִזִּים אֶחָד לְחִטָּאת: ⁷¹וּלְזֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה עֶתְדִים חֲמִשָּׁה כְּבָשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה זֶה קָרְבַּן אַחִיעֶזֶר בֶּן־עַמִּישַׁדַּי: פ

⁷²בַּיּוֹם עֲשֶׂתִּי עֶשֶׂר יוֹם נָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי אֲשֵׁר שָׁבִיעִי פַּגְעִיאֵל בֶּן־עֶכְרָן: ⁷³קָרְבָּנוֹ קִעְרַת־כֶּסֶף אַחַת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזֶּרֶק אֶחָד כֶּסֶף שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם | מְלֵאִים סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה: ⁷⁴כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב מְלֵאָה קִטְרֶת: ⁷⁵פָּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל אֶחָד כְּבֶשֶׂת־אֶחָד בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה: ⁷⁶שְׁעִיר־עִזִּים אֶחָד לְחִטָּאת: ⁷⁷וּלְזֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים בָּקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה עֶתְדִים חֲמִשָּׁה כְּבָשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה זֶה קָרְבַּן פַּגְעִיאֵל בֶּן־עֶכְרָן: פ

⁷⁸בַּיּוֹם שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר יוֹם נָשִׂיא לְבְנֵי נַפְתָּלִי אַחִירַע בֶּן־עֵינָן: ⁷⁹קָרְבָּנוֹ קִעְרַת־כֶּסֶף אַחַת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמֵאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזֶּרֶק אֶחָד כֶּסֶף שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם | מְלֵאִים סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה: ⁸⁰כֶּף אַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה זָהָב מְלֵאָה קִטְרֶת: ⁸¹פָּר אֶחָד בֶּן־בָּקָר אֵיל אֶחָד כְּבֶשֶׂת־אֶחָד

the herd, one ram, and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; ⁸²one goat for a purification offering; ⁸³and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Ahira son of Enan.

⁸⁴This was the dedication offering for the altar from the chieftains of Israel upon its being anointed: silver bowls, 12; silver basins, 12; gold ladles, 12. ⁸⁵Silver per bowl, 130; per basin, 70. Total silver of vessels, 2,400 sanctuary shekels. ⁸⁶The 12 gold ladles filled with incense—10 sanctuary shekels per ladle—total gold of the ladles, 120.

⁸⁷Total of herd animals for burnt offerings, 12 bulls; of rams, 12; of yearling lambs, 12—with their proper grain offerings; of goats for purification offerings, 12. ⁸⁸Total of herd animals for sacrifices of well-being, 24 bulls; of rams, 60; of he-goats, 60; of yearling lambs, 60. That was the dedication offering for the altar after its anointing.

⁸⁹When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him, he would hear the Voice addressing him from above the cover that was on top of the Ark of the Pact between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.

84. dedication offering The initiation offering.

89. The Ark was conceived as God's footstool and the pedestal of His throne. God delivered commands to Moses while he stood alone in the outer room of the Tent, separated from the Ark "throne" by the screening veil. This fulfilled

בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה: ⁸²שְׁעִיר־עֵינִים אֶחָד לְחֻטָּאת: ⁸³וּלְזֹבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים בֶּקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵילִם חֲמִשָּׁה עֲתָדִים חֲמִשָּׁה כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה חֲמִשָּׁה זֶה קָרְבַּן אַחִירַע בֶּן־עֵינָן: פ

⁸⁴זֹאת הַחֲנֻכָּת הַמְּזֻבַּח בְּיוֹם הַמִּשָּׁח אֹתוֹ מֵאֵת נְשִׂאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל קַעֲרֹת כֶּסֶף שְׁתַּיִם עֶשְׂרֵה מְזֻרְקֵי־כֶסֶף שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר כַּפּוֹת זָהָב שְׁתַּיִם עֶשְׂרֵה: ⁸⁵שִׁלְשִׁים וּמֵאָה הַקַּעֲרָה הָאֶחָת כֶּסֶף וְשִׁבְעִים הַמְּזֻרְק הָאֶחָד כָּל כֶּסֶף הַכֵּלִים אֲלָפִים וְאַרְבַּע־מֵאוֹת בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ: ⁸⁶כַּפּוֹת זָהָב שְׁתַּיִם־עֶשְׂרֵה מֵלֵאֵת קְטֹרֶת עֶשְׂרֵה עֶשְׂרֵה הַכֶּף בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ כָּל־זָהָב הַכַּפּוֹת עֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה:

⁸⁷כָּל־הַבָּקָר לְעֹלָה שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר פָּרִים אֵילִם שְׁנַיִם־עֶשֶׂר כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר וּמִנְחָתָם וּשְׁעִירֵי עֵינִים שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר לְחֻטָּאת: ⁸⁸וְכֹל בֶּקָר | זֹבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים עֶשְׂרִים וְאַרְבַּעַּה פָּרִים אֵילִם שְׁשִׁים עֲתָדִים שְׁשִׁים כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה שְׁשִׁים זֹאת חֲנֻכַּת הַמְּזֻבַּח אַחֲרֵי הַמִּשָּׁח אֹתוֹ:

⁸⁹וּבָבֹא מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶת־הַקּוֹל מִדַּבֵּר אֵלָיו מֵעַל הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־אֲרֹן הָעֵדוּת מִבֵּין שְׁנֵי הַכְּרֻבִים וַיְדַבֵּר אֵלָיו: פ

God's promise: "I will [speak] to you from above the cover, from between the two cherubim that are on top of the Ark of the Pact" (Exod. 25:22).

Ark of the Pact "The Pact," with the definite article (*ha-edut*), can mean only the two tablets of the Decalogue, which were deposited in the Ark (Exod. 25:10–16).

הַפְּטָרָה לְנָסוֹ

HAFTARAH FOR NASO

JUDGES 13:2–25

This *haftarah* is drawn from the beginning of the cycle of Samson stories (Judg. 13–16). The prophecy announcing his birth states that he will be “the first to deliver Israel from the Philistines” (13:5). His travail will anticipate the battles to be waged against the Philistines into the early days of the monarchy, leading to the death of King Saul and to the glory of King David.

This opening chapter of the cycle focuses on the birth announcement and on the birth itself. The Sages spotlighted Samson’s birth by omitting the first verse, which reports the Philistines’ role as a means of divine punishment for Israel’s sins. Such editing separated the birth scene from its historical setting, underscoring the conditions prescribed for the mother during pregnancy.

There is no account of any prayer for a child uttered by Manoah or by his wife. The divine messenger appears with the suddenness of unexpected grace. His prediction has the qualities of an oracle, like that from the divine messengers to Abraham (Gen. 18) who announced that the barren Sarah soon would conceive and bear a son.

RELATION OF THE *HAFTARAH* TO THE *PARASHAH*

The *haftarah* and the *parashah* bring together two biblical traditions about the nazirite. The Torah (Num. 6) formally delineates the rules and rituals for anyone, male or female, who enters the consecrated status of a nazirite through a vow. The *parashah* states nothing about lifetime vows or vows affecting others (including unborn children). This silence rings “loud and clear” when the *parashah* is compared with the *haftarah*, a popular narrative about a person consecrated from conception to be a nazirite for life. Indeed, the mother-to-be during pregnancy already observes some of the prescriptions ritually incumbent on

the nazirite-to-be. (The child’s obligations in this regard are implied, not explicitly stated.) Furthermore, the mother has not entered this state through any vow of her own.

The language and ideals of the *haftarah* are influenced by other biblical traditions bearing on the status of nazirite. The woman is instructed “to let no razor touch his head, for the boy is to be a nazirite to God” (Judg. 13:5). The formulation recalls the rule in Numbers in which a person consecrated as “nazirite of the LORD” must let “no razor . . . touch his head” (6:5). Both texts deal with a comparable ritual status in which the hair of one’s head may not be shorn while the consecration is in effect. Eventually the shearing of Samson’s hair through the wiles of Delilah (Judg. 16) will remove the hero’s sacred character, reflected in his loss of power.

The *parashah* and the *haftarah* juxtapose two types of actions and devotion. One of them is marked by the purposeful decision to abstain from intoxicants and impurities, and thus to approximate priestly sanctity (see Sifrei Num. 26). Devotion to God is expressed through self-limitation and restraint, perhaps rebalancing one’s spiritual life (see MT De-ot 3:1). The nazirite in the *parashah* has deliberately chosen to serve God and must sustain that decision through prescribed regulations for a limited period of time.

The other approach embodies the force of destiny that marks the self with unchosen obligations. The assumption of a sacred status will infuse Samson with powers that transcend ordinary limits. Accordingly, Samson, who has not chosen his lifelong nazirite status, will devote his transformed and consecrated condition to self-centered and isolated acts of revenge.

The *parashah* thus shows how the natural self may become transformed (for a time), fully consecrated “to the LORD,” and may serve as a model

for many others. In contradistinction, the *haftarah* introduces an all-too-human self in whom the “spirit” of supernatural energy reverberates.

Samson’s private passions will fuel and direct his service to the community. Only derivatively and accidentally will they benefit others.

13

²There was a certain man from Zorah, of the stock of Dan, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren and had borne no children. ³An angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “You are barren and have borne no children; but you shall conceive and bear a son. ⁴Now be careful not to drink wine or other intoxicant, or to eat anything impure. ⁵For you are going to conceive and bear a son; let no razor touch his head, for the boy is to be a nazirite to God from the womb on. He shall be the first to deliver Israel from the Philistines.”

⁶The woman went and told her husband, “A man of God came to me; he looked like an angel of God, very frightening. I did not ask him where he was from, nor did he tell me his name. ⁷He said to me, ‘You are going to conceive and bear a son. Drink no wine or other intoxicant, and eat nothing impure, for the boy is to be a nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death!’”

⁸Manoah pleaded with the LORD. “Oh, my Lord!” he said, “please let the man of God that You sent come to us again, and let him instruct us how to act with the child that is to be born.”

⁹God heeded Manoah’s plea, and the angel of

יג ²וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד מִצְרָעָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת הַדָּנִי וּשְׁמוֹ מָנוּחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יָלְדָה: ³וַיֵּרָא מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ הִנֵּה-נָא אֶת-עֲקָרְךָ וְלֹא יָלְדָתְּ וְהָרִית וְיָלְדָת בֶּן: ⁴וְעַתָּה הֲשִׁמְרִי נָא וְאַל-תִּשְׁתִּי יַיִן וְשִׁכָר וְאַל-תֹּאכְלִי כָּל-טָמֵא: ⁵כִּי הִנֵּף הָרֶה וְיָלְדָת בֶּן וּמִוְרָה לֹא-יִעֲלֶה עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ כִּי-נָזִיר אֱלֹהִים יִהְיֶה הַנֶּעַר מִן-הַבֶּטֶן וְהוּא יַחֲלֵ לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד פְּלִשְׁתִּים:

⁶וַתָּבֹא הָאִשָּׁה וַתֹּאמֶר לְאִישָׁהּ לֵאמֹר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים בָּא אֵלַי וּמְרִאֵהוּ כְּמִרְאֵה מַלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים נֹרָא מְאֹד וְלֹא שְׁאַלְתִּיהוּ אֲנִי-מִזֶּה הוּא וְאֶת-שְׁמוֹ לֹא-הֲגִיד לִי: ⁷וַיֹּאמֶר לִי הִנֵּף הָרָה וְיָלְדָת בֶּן וְעַתָּה אַל-תִּשְׁתִּי יַיִן וְשִׁכָר וְאַל-תֹּאכְלִי כָּל-טָמֵא כִּי-נָזִיר אֱלֹהִים יִהְיֶה הַנֶּעַר מִן-הַבֶּטֶן עַד-יוֹם מוֹתוֹ: פ

⁸וַיַּעֲתָר מָנוּחַ אֶל-יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֲדוֹנָי אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתָּ יְבוֹא-נָא עִוֵּר אֵלֵינוּ וַיִּוְרְנוּ מִהֲנַעֲשֶׂה לְנֶעַר הַיּוֹלֵד: וַיִּשְׁמַע הָאֱלֹהִים בְּקוֹל מָנוּחַ וַיִּבֹא

Judges 13:2. of the stock of Dan This note seems to reflect the tribe of Dan’s early settlement along the southwest coast, near the Philistine territories. The Danites had difficulty securing land on the maritime plain, however, and were driven back into the highlands by the Amorites (Judg. 1:34). Near the end of the period of the chieftains (“Judges”), much of the tribe settled in the north-eastern area of the western tribes (Judg. 18).

3. angel Hebrew: *mal-akh* (messenger). This designation will also appear in verses 13, 15–18, and 20–21. Because the being has a human appearance, Manoah will “not know that he was an

angel of the LORD” (v. 16). Manoah will request a repeat visit from “the man of God” (v. 8) to verify that this oracle is of divine origin.

7. eat nothing impure This rule is not precise. It may extend the prohibition against intoxicants to include ritually impure food or drink, or it may embrace all that the Torah prohibits a nazirite to ingest (Num. 6:2–3; see Radak). It is significant that the instruction is given to the woman who will conceive and bear the nazirite. Presumably the concern is to prevent his desecralization in utero.

God came to the woman again. She was sitting in the field and her husband Manoah was not with her. ¹⁰The woman ran in haste to tell her husband. She said to him, “The man who came to me before has just appeared to me.” ¹¹Manoah promptly followed his wife. He came to the man and asked him: “Are you the man who spoke to my wife?” “Yes,” he answered. ¹²Then Manoah said, “May your words soon come true! What rules shall be observed for the boy?” ¹³The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “The woman must abstain from all the things against which I warned her. ¹⁴She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, or drink wine or other intoxicant, or eat anything impure. She must observe all that I commanded her.”

¹⁵Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “Let us detain you and prepare a kid for you.” ¹⁶But the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “If you detain me, I shall not eat your food; and if you present a burnt offering, offer it to LORD.”—For Manoah did not know that he was an angel of the LORD. ¹⁷So Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name? We should like to honor you when your words come true.” ¹⁸The angel said to him, “You must not ask for my name; it is unknowable!”

¹⁹Manoah took the kid and the grain offering and offered them up on the rock to the LORD; and a marvelous thing happened while Manoah and his wife looked on. ²⁰As the flames leaped up from the altar toward the sky, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flames of the altar, while Manoah and his wife looked on; and they flung themselves on their faces to the ground.—²¹The angel of the LORD never appeared again to Manoah and his wife.—Manoah then realized that it had been an angel of the LORD. ²²And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, for we have seen a divine being.”

מִלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים עוֹד אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה וְהִיא יוֹשֶׁבֶת בַּשָּׂדֶה וּמְנוּחַ אִישָׁה אֵין עִמָּה: 10 וְתַמְהֵל הָאִשָּׁה וּתְרַץ וּתְגַד לְאִישָׁהּ וּתֹאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה נִרְאָה אֵלַי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-בָּא בַיּוֹם אֵלָי: 11 וַיִּקָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ מְנוּחַ אַחֲרֵי אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּבֹא אֶל-הָאִישׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הֲאֵתָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-דִּבַּרְתָּ אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי: 12 וַיֹּאמֶר מְנוּחַ עֲתָה יִבֹּא דְבַרְיָךְ מִה-יְהִיָּה מִשְׁפֹּט-הַנְּעַר וּמַעֲשָׂהוּ: 13 וַיֹּאמֶר מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֶל-מְנוּחַ מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר-אֲמַרְתִּי אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה תִשְׁמָר: 14 מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר-יֵצֵא מִגֶּפֶן הַיֵּינָן לֹא תֹאכַל וַיֵּינִן וְשִׁכָר אֶל-תִּשְׁתְּ וּכְל־טְמֵאָה אֶל-תֹּאכַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר-צִוִּיתִיָּה תִשְׁמָר:

15 וַיֹּאמֶר מְנוּחַ אֶל-מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה נַעֲצְרָה-נָא אוֹתְךָ וְנַעֲשֵׂה לְפָנֶיךָ גְּדִי עֲזִים: 16 וַיֹּאמֶר מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֶל-מְנוּחַ אִם-תַּעֲצְרֵנִי לֹא-אֲכַל בְּלַחְמְךָ וְאִם-תַּעֲשֵׂה עֲלַי לִיהוָה תַּעֲלֶנָּה כִּי לֹא-יִדַע מְנוּחַ כִּי-מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה הוּא: 17 וַיֹּאמֶר מְנוּחַ אֶל-מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה מִי שְׁמֶךָ כִּי-יִבֹּא דְבַרְיָךְ וּכְבִדְדוּנְךָ: 18 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה לָמָּה זֶה תִשְׁאֵל לְשִׁמִּי וְהוּא-פָּלְאִי: 19

וַיִּקָּח מְנוּחַ אֶת-גְּדִי הָעֲזִים וְאֶת-הַמִּנְחָה וַיַּעַל עַל-הַצֹּר לִיהוָה וּמִפְּלֵא לַעֲשׂוֹת וּמְנוּחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ רָאִים: 20 וַיְהִי בַעֲלוֹת הַלֶּהֶב מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַשְּׁמִימָה וַיַּעַל מִלְאָךְ-יְהוָה בְּלֶהֱב הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וּמְנוּחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ רָאִים וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם אֶרְצָה: 21 וְלֹא-יִסֹּף עוֹד מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה לְהִרְאֹה אֶל-מְנוּחַ וְאֶל-אִשְׁתּוֹ אַזּוֹ יִדַע מְנוּחַ כִּי-מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה הוּא: 22 וַיֹּאמֶר מְנוּחַ אֶל-אִשְׁתּוֹ מוֹת נָמוֹת כִּי אֱלֹהִים רָאִינוּ:

18. unknowable Refusal to reveal a name recalls the encounter between Jacob and an angel at the Jabbok ford (Gen. 32:30). Indeed, that detail used the same Hebrew words found here.

²³But his wife said to him, “Had the LORD meant to take our lives, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from us, nor let us see all these things; and He would not have made such an announcement to us.”

²⁴The woman bore a son, and she named him Samson. The boy grew up, and the LORD blessed him. ²⁵The spirit of the LORD first moved him in the encampment of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

²³וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִשְׁתּוֹ לֹא חָפֵץ יְהוָה לְהַמִּיתֵנוּ לֹא-לָקַח מִיַּדְנוּ עֹלָה וּמִנְחָה וְלֹא הִרְאֵנוּ אֶת-כָּל-אֵלֶּה וְכַעַת לֹא הִשְׁמִיעָנוּ כֹּזֵאת:

²⁴וַתֵּלֶד הָאִשָּׁה בֶן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ שַׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּגְדַּל הַנָּעַר וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ יְהוָה: ²⁵וַתַּחֲלֵ רוּחַ יְהוָה לְפַעֲמוֹ בְּמַחֲנֵי-דָן בֵּין צֹרְעָה וּבֵין אֶשְׁתָּאֵל: פ