



NAZIRITES

1. The legislation about Nazirites is given in Numbers 6:1–21.
2. Men and women could be Nazirites (Num. 6:2).
3. Nazirites made a vow to separate themselves to the Lord (Num. 6:2). A man or a woman became a Nazirite by making a vow of separation to the Lord. The verb "separate" (*gazar*) has the same root as "Nazarite" (*nazir*).
4. The Nazirite vow was voluntary. No one was commanded to make the vow of a Nazirite. Josephus (*Antiquities* 19.294) says there were 'very many' (*mala suchnous*) Nazirites during the reign of Herod Agrippa I (A.D. 37–44).
5. Nazirites separated from all grape products and intoxicating beverages (Num. 6:3–4). They did not drink wine (*yayin*), liquor (*shekar*), vinegar of wine (*homets yayin*), vinegar of liquor (*homets shekar*) or any juice of grapes (*kol mishrat 'anavim*). Nor were they allowed to eat fresh or dried grapes (raisins).

It involves abstinence from wine...symbolic of the natural pleasures of life (Ps 104:15), and even of grapes in any form...representing earthly joys harmless in themselves but which cannot give the believer the delight in the Lord which his heart craves. This feature is therefore the outward symbol of a yieldedness which finds all its joy in the Lord (*Unger's Bible Handbook*, 123).

6. Nazirite vows were usually made for limited periods of time (Num. 6:4, 5, 6, 8, 13). They have a beginning and an end—and the length of a vow is measured in days. They were seldom made for life. We know of only three perpetual Nazirites—Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist (Judges 13:5, 7; 16:17; 1 Sam. 1:11; Luke 1:15).
7. The length of a Nazirite vow was optional. There were no commands regarding the length of a Nazirite vow. The length varied.
8. They could not cut their hair (Num. 6:5; cf. Judges 13:5; 16:17). Haircuts were forbidden during the time of their vow. This prohibition applied only to the hair of the head, not to other body hair. They could shave or trim their beards. Long hair was a constant reminder of their vow and a sign of their submission to God.
9. Nazirites were not allowed to go near a corpse (Num. 6:6–7). It would make them unclean. This prohibition includes parents and siblings.
10. If a person died suddenly near a Nazirite, their separation was defiled and they had to start all over (Num. 6:9–12). They had to shave their hair on the seventh day (6:9), offer a sin and burnt offering on the eighth day (6:10–11), sanctify their head (6:11), and offer a guilt offering (6:12).
11. To complete their vows Nazirites had to offer a burnt offering, sin offering, and peace offering (6:13–17), shave their heads and burn their hair (6:18), and offer a wave offering (6:19–20).
12. After completing their vows they could drink wine again (Num. 6:20). Use of liquor, grape products, and haircuts also resumed.