



REFORMED

PAVILION

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 44

FEBRUARY 7, 2026

*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.*

—Psalm 27:5

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MEDITATION

And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock. And thou shalt kill the bullock before the LORD, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar. And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul that is above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and burn them upon the altar. But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin offering...And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it. Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.

—Exodus 29:10–14, 36–37

The Blood of Bulls

The fourth ceremony that God appointed for the consecration of the priests was the sacrifice of a bullock. For each of the seven days of the priests' consecration, Moses would sacrifice a bullock at the door of the tabernacle.

Why must a bullock be sacrificed? First, the sacrifice of the bullock was a sin offering that gave the priests the right to minister at God's altar. God's altar was a holy place. God visited the altar to pour out his righteous indignation against sinners. Our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). The fiery coals in the brazen altar pictured the righteous indignation of the holy God against sin. What a holy place was God's altar! How could the priests ever minister at such an altar? For the high priest was a sinner. The sons of the high priest were sinners. All the people in Israel were sinners. Go through the entire camp, and what would one find? Sinners! And not a righteous man among them! How could such sinful people approach such a holy altar through such sinful priests?

Why, they could approach God's altar through the sin offering of the bullock! By the shedding and the spreading of the bullock's blood, the priests' sins were covered in the sight of the holy God. For the bullock was a substitute for the priests.

Aaron and his sons put their hands upon the head of the bullock, picturing the transfer of the priests' sins to the offering. The bullock was slain, and its fat and some of its organs were burned upon the altar, a picture of the righteous God's slaying and burning the substitute instead of his people. The blood of the bullock was spread upon the horns of the altar and poured beside the bottom of the altar, a picture that the priests may only come to God's holy altar through the way of blood. What mercy for God's people, who were sinners! They could come to God's holy altar through the blood of the bulls of the sin offering!

It is the gospel of salvation for such sinners as you and I. For the blood of bulls was a picture of the true sin offering, Jesus Christ. The bullocks were merely the type, "for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the type, for "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (v. 10).

Second, the sacrifice of the bullock was a testimony that the servant of Jehovah would always be despised of men. The flesh and skin and dung of the bullock were burned with fire outside the camp. Man does not want a kingdom

of righteousness through the blood of the savior. Man wants a kingdom of man, man's will, man's power, and man's glory. Thus man always crucifies Christ outside the camp. But thanks be to God, who has made us the offscouring of the world with Christ and who has covered our sins through his atoning blood.

We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.
For the bodies of those beasts, whose

blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. (Heb. 13:10–14)

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S BANNER ARTICLES

The Banner

March 2, 1922

(p. 136)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article CXLVIII: The New King and His Kingdom: The Nazarite as a Prophetic Appearance (continued)

It is not difficult to see what the message was which the Nazarite delivered in his entire appearance to the people of Israel, a message all the more emphatic and forceful in a time of religious apostasy and spiritual amalgamation with the nations that lived round about the people of God of the old dispensation. The Nazarite was the living embodiment of the idea of consecration to God through separation, and he preached to Israel clearly the truth that for the people of God before the coming of Christ literal separation was their only safety. In isolation lay their strength and safety in the literal sense of the word. That was the message the person of the Nazarite carried to Israel. And in preaching that message the Nazarite also pointed forward to him that would overcome that world and overcome the power of sin and death, so that in him this timid separation would come to an end.

The idea of consecration to God was especially expressed in the free growth of the Nazarite's hair. This has been denied. It has been explained that it was the custom among the Israelites that the men would have their hair cut short, so that

for a man to walk about with long hair was a mark of distinction and separation. And from this it has been deduced that also the long hair symbolized separation rather than consecration. Or it has been interpreted as a symbol of self-sacrifice and renunciation of the world. But all this is in contradiction with the text itself, which states: "He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, or for his brother or for his sister when they die; because the consecration of his God is upon his head" (Num. 6:7). The last clause, mentioning the consecration of his God upon his head, plainly refers to the symbol of consecration as being in his hair. How this symbolic significance must be explained may be a question. Keil explains that the free growth of the hair is expressive of abundant vitality and strength, a sign or ornament in which the entire strength and all the powers of full manhood were exhibited, so that in this full growth of the hair the Nazarite wore the symbol of complete consecration of all his powers to the Lord. We would rather combine this with the scriptural idea of dependence as signified in the long hair. If we combine these two ideas, which are

both supported in Scripture, we obtain this result, that the long hair is symbol of fulness of strength and vitality submitted to the Lord and, therefore, consecrated to him. However this may be, certain it seems that the long hair of the Nazarite was the sign of his consecration to God, even as the anointing oil upon the high priest's head.

The idea of separation was expressed in the requirement to abstain from anything prepared from the vine, and to keep aloof from the bodies of the dead. But these two requirements expressed a twofold idea. The vine and the bodies of the dead are themselves symbols of two entirely different things. In itself the vine is good and noble. It always occurs as such in Scripture. It is not from sin, but from creation. In itself, therefore, the vine represents nothing sinful or corrupting. Wine is good, neither is it a cause of sin. It is a means to quicken the spirit and enhance the joy of life in the good sense of the word. The vine is a noble product of God's creation. It is only through sin that the vine and its product become a source of danger and temptation. It is not thus that the vine is a source of danger as such and cannot be touched with impunity, but sin cannot touch the vine. And when, therefore, the Nazarite might not touch the vine he bore the message of sin and weakness through sin to the people of Israel. If the Nazarite had been without sin, there would have been no source of danger for him in the vine or in any strong drink. But the requirement to keep aloof from anything prepared of the vine pointed to his own weakness and sinful nature. Sin had not been overcome as yet. But different it is with the requirement not to touch any dead body. Here the corruption, the source of danger and uncleanness, was not in the Nazarite, but in the world outside of him. The dead body was the symbol of corruption. He might not touch it, lest he became unclean. A different idea is expressed, therefore, in this latter element of his vow than was symbolized in his abstinence from the vine. That he was to keep aloof from the vine bore the message of his own weakness and corruption by nature, so that he could not rightly use the good things of God. That he was not allowed to touch the body of the dead person

expressed the idea that also the world round about him was corrupt, and that he had to separate himself from it. He lived as a sinful and weak man, in whom the power of sin had not been overcome in the midst of a corrupt world, that was a continual source of danger and temptation to him. Hence, if he would truly consecrate himself to the Lord he was to live a life of isolation, abstain from the vine, and keep away from the bodies of the dead, even though they were of his nearest relatives.

In all this the Nazarite was in the first place a picture of Israel as the people of God. Israel was to be a people holy unto the Lord. It was a kingdom of priests. They were to be God's party, his covenant people in the world. They were called to live according to the precepts of the Most High. However, Israel was sinful. The power of sin was within them. They had not overcome the power of evil that corrupted their nature. By nature they were corrupt and defiled. Not inclined they were to consecrate themselves to Jehovah. And, on the other hand, they were surrounded by an evil world. The nations round about them, serving other gods, representing the world of darkness, were a continual snare to the people of God. These two elements combined made it absolutely necessary for Israel to maintain its isolation. It might not seek association with the other nations. It might not allow the other gods to gain a foothold in the holy land. Isolation, literal separation, was Israel's safety. That was the message of the Nazarite. But in all this the Nazarite pointed to the Christ. For Christ was mightier than Israel. For Israel it was not safe to associate with the world of darkness, for the danger was that by that world of darkness it would be overcome and swallowed up. But for that very reason Israel looked forward to the Mightier One than they, who could stand in the midst of the world and instead of being overcome by it would conquer the power of corruption and death and appear as the mighty victor over all.

If this is plain, we can understand that the Nazarite had a special calling to appear in times of amalgamation with the nations round about them. Then we can also understand the wonderful

appearance of a man like Samson. In every way he was a picture of the nation of Israel at his own time. But at the same time his appearance was prophetic of a mightier than Samson that was to come. Of him we read in "Fairbairn on Prophecy" (pp. 37-40):

"The most singular example, however, of the whole class and the one that in its simple Nazaritish character bore most distinctly the aspect of a prophecy, is that of Samson—in itself a kind of sacred enigma. Not, however, an inexplicable enigma if viewed in connection with the circumstances of the time and with due regard to its prophetical character. The time was one of backsliding and rebuke. The marvellous story begins immediately after it has been said that 'the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.' Judges had been raised up for their deliverance before, with only a partial and temporary success, for the root of the evil was never properly reached. But the Lord now bethought him of trying, as his chosen instrument of working, a Nazarite, wonderful in his very birth, and wonderful still more for the singular gift with which he was endowed—yet trying him not solely, nor even chiefly for the purpose of breaking the Philistine yoke, but for what was more urgently needed, the imparting of a proper insight into God's mind, and awakening a right spirit of devotedness to his fear. It was this which alone could reestablish the people in honor and blessing, as the oppressions and miseries that lay upon them were the result merely of broken vows, and unfaithful dealing in the covenant of God. And how could the requisite instruction be more touchingly and impressively conveyed to them than by the marvelous and mournful story as presents itself in the life of Samson? A child is

supernaturally promised and given, expressly on account of the exigency of the times—the child of a mother laid, for the occasion, under the restrictions of the Nazarite vow, and himself appointed to be a Nazarite from his birth—one so emphatically called to separate himself to the Lord that to every thoughtful mind he must have seemed a personified Israel, the peculiar representative of a people standing under covenant to God * * * *."

In this light, namely, as supernaturally raised by the grace of the Lord to be a personified Israel and the bearer of a prophetic message to Israel, we can also understand the apostasy of Samson repeatedly manifest, his weakness, his being finally overcome by the enemies he is called to fight, but also his revival and the tremendous slaughter effected by him among the enemy in the moment of his death. For in all this Samson was a living picture of Israel. His life bore the message that Israel was to live in consecration to Jehovah, a life of consecration which was possible only through separation. At the same time his repeated failure and final defeat and abject humiliation presented to the people a picture of their own disobedience and its awful result, as well as it predicted to them that even in their isolation they could not ultimately gain the victory. For that reason Samson succumbs, is practically overcome, and has disappeared from the scene just before his most tremendous victory upon the Philistines in the hour of his death. So Israel, the Nazarite people, would degrade, would, at the evening of its national history, appear as a people overcome by its enemies round about, present a picture of misery and humiliation, only to be revived in him that was to deliver Israel and who overcame the power of darkness in his death.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

