



The Crown of the Nazirite

לְאַבְיוֹ וּלְאִמּוֹ וּלְאֶחָיו וּלְאֶחָתוֹ לֹא יִטְמָא לָהֶם בְּמָתָם כִּי יָגֵר אֶלְהֵיו עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ:

Even if his father or mother or brother or sister should die, he is not to defile himself, because the crown of consecration to his God is upon his head. (Num. 6:7)

One of the most peculiar Hebrew terms to translate, along with the difficulties associated with explaining the laws associated with it, is the word “נָזִיר,” a word which is therefore often just transliterated “Nazir” or given an English suffix as “Nazirite.” The laws associated with the Nazirite indicate that the word is associated with a vow of self-consecration to God and abstinence, along with keeping oneself in a state of purity. The “z” center consonant in Hebrew often derives from at “dh,” and so the word is likely closely related to the term for “vow,” “נָדָר,” and, indeed, the two words are conjoined in 6:1 “לְנָדָר נָזִיר לְהִזָּיֵר לָהֶ” “to vow a vow of Nazirite, to abstain for the LORD.”

But yet another, more direct connection is made in 6:7 quoted above, which uses the word “Nezer,” a word which seems to mean a crown or diadem, something which is clearly “upon his head.” The verse connects the “crown” of Nazirite consecration to the diadem of the High Priest, and this seems to be one explanation as to why the Nazirite, like the High Priest, cannot defile himself in mourning for his closest relatives. Of course, the Nazirite also “consecrates his head” in a different way than the High Priest, namely, by alternately growing his hair and then shaving it off as a kind of offering. And, of course, the High Priest, like other priests, is dedicating himself for a period of service to God just as a Nazirite does. It’s not clear what that service might consist of in each case, other than abstinence, but the term implies some kind of dedication to a holy task and calling. And dedicated Nazirites such as Samson, like Prophets and High Priests, had political leadership roles to play, as well, like kings. To all such leaders were entrusted crowns, but those crowns themselves were symbols of consecration and dedication to the service of God, People, and Country. Indeed, the crown on the head of any mortal ruler must be worn in acknowledgment that one is but a vassal to the true King of Kings and must be totally dedicated to His Service.

I often find myself defending an ethos of abstinence and discipline, essentially defending the Nazirite against his detractors. Of course, our Nazirite has specifically dedicated himself to God (although it’s not clear what he should do with his term of service). But the fact that we treat the Nazirite as if wearing a crown seems to me a further indication of the respect and esteem in which we hold him. And it is out of that respect that we normally exempt him (except where the corpse is in front of him) from the usual mourning for close relatives. We respect and admire the strength and discipline it takes to follow a path of abstinence and dedicate oneself to be a holy man. There are those who interpret the Nazirite as having gone too far and even requiring atonement for his ascetic excesses. But (perhaps biased by my Platonic-Stoic outlook) I find only a positive outlook on the Nazirite in our text. I well know that discipline, abstinence, self-denial, abstemiousness, are key to developing great strength, even apart from a religious context. The dedication to that goal, and the setting of a period of dedication and consecration to that goal is an important part of that process. It is especially necessary and worthy of admiration in one who would wear the crown of a leader. There are those who would cast aspersions upon the ascetic as an escapist who removes himself from mainstream society. Some might even consider the retreat into consecration itself weak and self-indulgent, castigating the abstinent as too weak to handle their liquor. After all, is not the average householder living in the world with his family’s, his community’s and God’s demands stronger and more laudable than the ascetic? When abstinence is taken on for vain ends, which it usually is, I am often inclined to agree. But discipline and abstinence which starts off as merely vain and physical often leads, where there is openness to such things, to a cultivation of spirit, as well. Samson’s abstinence is admired for its endowing him with great strength. That strength leads to much vanity, or so it seems, and it led Samson to an evil end. And yet it did lead him to be able to be strong among his people for great leadership. The discipline and dedication which the abstinent begins to cultivate in his retreat but will lead to his being able to carry on within society’s midst when his term of consecration ends is worthy of our greatest admiration and respect.

Shabbat Naso

May 29-30, 2026 | 14 Sivan, 5786

SCHEDULE

Hertz: Parasha: 586 | Haftarah: 602

Kaplan: Parasha: 676 | Haftarah: 1184

Candle Lighting | 8:00 pm

Evening Services | 7:00 pm | **Little Synagogue**

Zemirot | 8:30 am | **Levy Auditorium**

Shahrit | 9:10 am | **Levy Auditorium**

Tot Shabbat & Youth 5+ | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room

Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Little Synagogue

Kiddush | following services | Paved Paradise | *Kiddush supporters: Francine Alfandary & Laurent Nahon, in memory of Robert Salomon Alfandary and Philippe Nahon*

Shabbat Afternoon Class | 7:10 pm | Baruch-Lev Kelman

Teen Shiur will not meet this week.

Evening Services | 7:55 pm

Habdala | 9:01 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Friday: 7:05 am

Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday (Minha & Arbit): **6:45 pm**

COMING UP

THIS SUNDAY: Israel Day Parade

This Sunday Morning, May 31 | 11:30 am-4:00 pm

For more information, visit IsraelDayon5th.com

We encourage everyone who can to attend this important annual event and display our solidarity at this crucial time. Am Yisrael Chai!

THIS TUESDAY: Why Local Elections Matter

Tuesday, June 2 | 7:30 pm | UWS Address provided upon RSVP

Learn about upcoming races, what's at stake, and how to get involved.

Refer to our emails for the registration link.

Shearith Israel Young Professionals is a proud co-sponsor

UWS Young Professionals Meet, Mingle, & Get Out The Vote!

Wednesday, June 10 | 8:00 pm | At a private UWS home | \$36

For young professionals and singles in their 20s & 30s

A night of sushi, cocktails, and civic engagement!

Registration required — refer to our emails for the link.

Graduation Shabbat: Kiddush & Scroll of Honor

Shabbat, June 13 | Following Morning Services

Submit graduate info and/or sponsor kiddush at shearithisrael.org/graduation5786.

The Sisterhood presents: Knitting & Needlework

Alternate Thursdays | In Private Homes | 2:30-4:00 pm

Next Session: TBD - if you have a preferred time, let us know!

Please contact Vivienne (vivienneroumani@gmail.com) or Aura (aurabijou@yahoo.com) if interested and for the address.

KIDS KORNER

NEW DATE: The Summer Send Off!

Sunday June 7 | 4:30 pm | Paved Paradise | Register at shearithisrael.org

For youth of all ages! Parents and grandparents welcome

Come join CSI Youth for an amazing end of year party with tie-dye, backyard BBQ, games, and so much more!

To win a raffle ticket at kiddush, find Dalya & Jake with the answer to this riddle:

*I take a vow and choose a special track,
Some things I love, I promise to hold back.
No grapes or haircuts till my time is through,
Who in Parashat Naso fits this clue?*

COMING UP: SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL PROGRAMS

Faith, Freedom, and the First Amendment:

A Symposium on Religious Liberty

Monday, June 8 | 11:00 am-12:30 pm | Touro Synagogue, Newport, RI

Keynote Speaker: Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

With: Rabbi Dr. Stuart Halpern, Dr. Tevi Troy, & Dr. Joseph Laconte

Registration & details at shearithisrael.org/faith-freedom-symposium.

GET YOUR TICKETS!

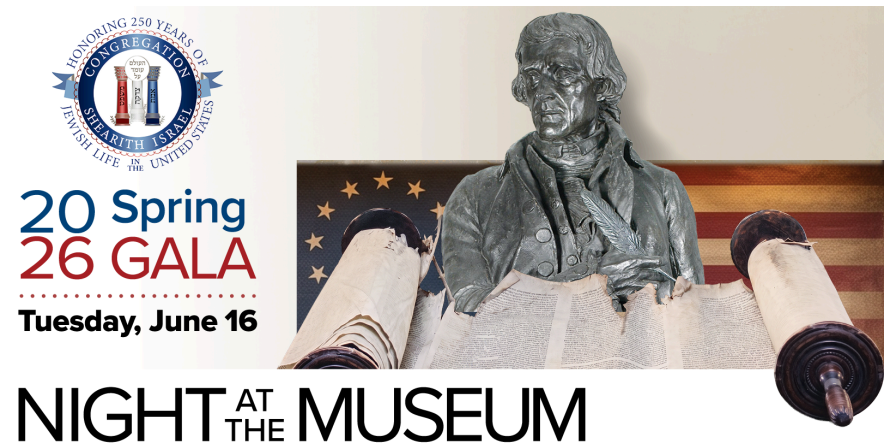
Be included in the commemorative booklet — submit tributes by **THIS Monday!**

2026 Spring Gala: Night at the Museum

Tuesday Evening, June 16

Start your evening with Rabbi Soloveichik **after closing hours** at The New York Historical's new Tang Wing for American Democracy, for an exclusive preview **before it opens to the public** of its forthcoming exhibit on the story of American liberty. Followed by a gala reception at Shearith Israel.

For details, tickets, and sponsorships, go to shearithisrael.org/gala2026.



NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Shabbat morning we welcome a delegation of **Kolot Restart** fellows. Kolot Restart Fellowship brings together grassroots leaders from Israel's Gaza Envelope communities who have been at the forefront of rebuilding and reimagining communal life in the aftermath of October 7.

We mourn the passing of our member, **Dr. Albert Braverman**.
Condolences to his wife, **Daisy Braverman**.