

## Torah Portion Preview for Naso II

*Sabbath beginning June 2, 2023*

We read the rest of the Torah's longest portion this week. It is a sandwich beginning (bottom slice) with a detailed description of the Nazirite vow to abstain from grape products, hair cutting, and touching dead people. The ending (top slice) details each chieftain's bringing 200 shekels worth of silver basins and bowls, 10 shekels worth of gold ladles, plus two bulls, 5 rams, 5 he-goats, and 5 yearling lambs for sacrifice. In between (filling) is the short, poetic, beautiful priestly blessing that we say every Sabbath.

The slices are life-cycle events of promise and gratitude. We need blessing and protection to fulfill our promises to God. We need God's kindness and graciousness to replenish our gifts to God's people. For both we need the filling of God's favor and peace. On the verge of our life-cycle events, clergy may inspire our renewed devotion to God. Recent studies of creativity sources found opposing religious inspiration. Emotional exuberance inspires those practicing a religion known for obedience and liturgical splendor. Sublimated asceticism inspires more independent worshippers. Growth in congregations accompanies strict rules for working-class and inclusiveness for the middle class. In Naso II, we find Judaism drawing from both exuberance and asceticism.