

# AN EVER GROWING BADGE OF COURAGE

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

All the days of his Nazarite vow a razor shall not pass over his head until the completion of the days that he will be a Nazarite for the sake of HASHEM he shall be holy the growth of hair on his head shall grow. All the days of his abstinence for the sake of HASHEM he shall not come near a dead person. To his father or to his mother, to his brother or to his sister-he shall not contaminate himself to them upon their death, for the crown of G-d is upon his head. (Bamidbar 6:5-7)

For the crown of G-d is upon his head: Why is his hair called a crown? Come and see how many Mitzvos crown Israel. Is not an untamed growth of hair considered disgraceful and decrepit for the person that he does not manage his head? However since he is growing it for the sake of Heaven, the verse refers to it as a "crown of G-d upon his head!" (Midrash Rabba)

The Midrash explains nicely why the hair on his head is a crown. Still the original question remains; "Why is only this called by the Torah a "crown of G-d upon his head" and not any other equally worthy Mitzvah?!"

If truth would not be stranger than fiction I would not have believed the following story I heard more than twenty years ago and I would not expect you to believe it either but with that having been said, here it is: A boat load of American students was bobbing about the Kineret Sea in the north of Israel. One of those students, a girl, was somehow dangerously close to the edge and she was suddenly tossed off the boat. There she was flailing in the waters while everyone was screaming instructions to her.

Another small craft happened to be passing by at that moment with some religiously observant students aboard. The young Rabbi in charge saw the distress of the young woman in the water and he immediately leapt into action. He dove into the water without hesitation and pulled her to safety where she then needed to be revived.

After things had quieted down a bit one of the young men from the boatload of Americans approached the young Rabbi and asked him somewhat sarcastically, "I thought you weren't allowed to touch a woman!" The Rabbi looked at him blankly and asked rhetorically, "Where were you while she was drowning?"

In the meanwhile the young girl who was recovering from the trauma of the episode began to express her gratitude to the Rabbi that had just saved her life. She asked him what she could do to repay his heroism. Although his instinct was to not seek a reward he had a modest request and that

was that she should join his family for a Shabbos, to which she gladly agreed. She became a frequent guest at their home and eventually after a period of time she became fully Shomer Shabbos.

In the meanwhile that fellow who had made the wry comment to the Rabbi and who had received the sharp reply started to do some soul searching of his own. He wandered into a Yeshiva in Jerusalem and started to study Torah for the first time in his life. He decided to extend his stay and search further and deeper into the sea of the Talmud. One Shabbos he was set up to join a young family as a guest for a Friday night meal. There he slightly recognized the host until it dawned on him that it was no other than the Rabbi that jumped into the water to save that girl. The Rabbi had not recognized him because his appearance had changed somewhat. There too at the Shabbos table was the girl that had been rescued. The two of them became reacquainted that evening. A mutual interest was awakened and expressed and in short order they were dating. Well, not long after that, you guessed it, they were married. So as it turned out, the day the Rabbi dove into those choppy waters and rescued that girl he saved the young man too and their future generations.

What a deed he did!? However, seen outside of the context of the mortal danger factor, to the uneducated eye, the young man's smug comment contained elements of truth. What he did looked a lot like mixed swimming and worse. Isn't it a violation? No! It must be viewed as a response to an emergency. So too the Nazirite can only be understood properly as someone that's busy saving a life- his own, by accepting a strong spiritual regimen upon himself. That's what his hair represents. It is not at all shameful. Rather it's a "crown of G-d" and an ever growing badge of courage. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).