

MAY 29, 2012

Parashat Naso

Suspicious Behavior

And the spirit of jealousy comes upon him (Numbers 5:14)

ועבר עליו רוח קנאה (במדבר ה:יד)

Parashat Naso chronicles the troubling saga of the *sotah*, the woman suspected of infidelity that must undergo a difficult ritual in order to ascertain whether she remained faithful to her husband. According to the text, “the spirit of jealousy comes upon him, and he [becomes] jealous of his wife” (5:14). Why is the wife punished for her husband’s jealousy? Rashi (on 5:14) explained that in the Talmud (Sotah 3a) it states that her husband voiced his concern, in the presence of witnesses, and requested that she not act in a suspicious manner. The wife then willfully ignored his anxiety and again engaged in the same suspicious behavior. Since she discounted her husband’s genuine worries, she endured the unpleasant ritual that determined her faithfulness.

Like the *sotah*’s disregard for her husband’s concerns, Iran’s total disregard for the concerns voiced by the international community has brought greater suspicion upon its nuclear program.

Recently, a drawing was released based on information from inside an Iranian military site that shows an explosive containment chamber. This type of chamber is needed for nuclear arms-related tests that U.N. inspectors suspect Tehran has conducted there, [The Toronto Star](#) reported. The computer-generated drawing was provided by an official of a country tracking Iran’s nuclear program, yet Iran continues to deny such testing and has neither confirmed nor denied the existence of such a chamber. The chamber’s existence further indicates Iran’s pursuit of the capability to develop a nuclear weapon and provides a powerful reminder of exactly why the regime cannot be trusted. Meanwhile, the U.N. nuclear agency pressed Iran for access to “people, documents, information and sites” in talks closely followed by world powers for insights into Tehran’s tactics, [Agence France Presse](#) reported. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief inspector Hermann Nackaerts wants Iran to address claims made in a November IAEA report that at least until 2003, and possibly since, there were activities that could only conceivably be aimed at developing a bomb. As the Senate considers a bill that will ratchet up sanctions against Iran (S. 2101), we must remind our Senators that Iran’s suspicious behavior leaves the world no room for error. For more on Iran, click [here](#).

Just as the *sotah*’s questionable activity brought suspicion upon her, Iran’s questionable actions, combined with its dangerous and threatening rhetoric, have raised grave suspicions that cannot be ignored. ■

Making Peace Happen

And give you peace (Numbers 6:26)

וישם לך שלום (במדבר ו:כו)

The Talmud (Megillah 18) wonders, “Why did the Sages place the blessing for peace [*Sim Shalom* in the *Amidah*] immediately after the priestly blessing? [They did so for] it is written, ‘So shall they put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them’” (6:27). This interpretation suggests that God’s blessing for peace is not sufficient; we ourselves must pray for God to bring peace as well. Ba’al Haturim (on 6:26) adds that the *gematria*, or numeric equivalent, of the words *shalom* (peace) and *asu* (and they shall do) both equal 376 (ש-300 + ל-30 + ו-6 + מ-40 is equal to ש-70 + ש-300 + 6-1). This teaches us that “one should always attempt to initiate peace with all people.”

Following the Jewish principle that we not only pray for peace but work to create peace as well, the state of Israel continues to reach out to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in its efforts to negotiate a just and lasting peace.

Peace has escaped Israel for the past six decades, but with the support of its ally the United States, the Jewish state remains determined and hopeful to reach an agreement with all its neighbors. However, the peace process has been stalled as PA President Mahmoud Abbas has placed preconditions on the resumption of direct talks. Yet Israel remains committed to achieving a peace agreement with the Palestinian people. Recently, after signing an agreement with the Kadima party to form a unity government, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent a letter to Abbas explaining that the “national unity government has created a new opportunity to move the peace process ahead,” [Haaretz](#) reported. Moreover, the letter “included an official pledge by Netanyahu, for the first time in an official state document, to establish a demilitarized Palestinian state in keeping with the principle of a two-state solution.” Secretary of State Hillary Clinton [noted](#) that by forming the coalition government, Israel sent “a very strong signal” to revive peace talks with the Palestinians. “I think that it was heartening to see, when Prime Minister Netanyahu announced the new coalition between Likud and Kadima, that one of the central goals of this new coalition was to further the Middle East peace process,” Clinton said. For more on the peace process, click [here](#).

Following the ideal that we must “make” peace happen, Israel has demonstrated that it is ready to make costly sacrifices for peace with its neighbors. The Palestinians must exhibit a similar desire for peace, and return to the negotiating table in good faith and without preconditions in order to transform peace from a dream into a reality. ■

A Mother's Healthy Choices (Haftarah)

For the child shall be a Nazirite unto God (Judges 13:5)

כי נזיר אלקים יהיה הנער (שופטים יג:ה)

The Haftarah for Naso recounts the birth of Samson and his development into a powerful leader of Israel. We learn that before his birth an angel appeared to Samson's mother and conveyed some unusual instructions, explaining that the child was destined from heaven to be a Nazirite from birth, and therefore his mother could never cut his hair and was warned to “drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing” (13:4) during her pregnancy. Metzudat David (on 13:5) notes that in order for Samson to achieve his destiny, his mother was instructed to abstain from the items prohibited to a Nazirite even while pregnant.

Samson's mother was told to adjust her diet to ensure successful spiritual growth for her unborn son. Recent research conducted jointly in Israel and the United States confirms that a mother's diet can have a long-term impact on her child's physical health as well.

According to new research, women who are overweight before or during their pregnancies can affect their children's health even into adulthood, the website [NoCamels.com](#) reported. Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the University of Washington together found a direct correlation between excess weight in mothers and higher risks of life-threatening conditions in their children, such as high blood pressure and high sugar and fat levels in the blood. The study analyzed 1,400 people who were born in Jerusalem between the years of 1974-76 based on their birth records, including the weights of their mothers before and during pregnancy and the weight of the child at birth. Then the data was compared with the same group all at the age of 32, including their weight, blood pressure and sugar and fat levels in the blood, as well as measurements of body mass index. The results of the research showed a clear influence of the excess weight of the mothers on the weight of their children, affecting in turn other risk factors in adulthood. “We know now that events occurring early in life to fetuses have long-lasting consequences for the health of the adult person,” said Dr. Hagit Hochner. For more on how the U.S. and Israel share research, click [here](#).

Just as Samson's mother's lifestyle during pregnancy had long lasting effects on her son, joint research between Israel and the U.S. reminds mothers that their health choices while pregnant can impact their children's' futures. ■

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