

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Nasso
May 22, 2021 *** Sivan 11, 5781

Kol Rina – An Independent Minyan, is a traditional egalitarian community. We are haimish (homey/folksy), friendly, participatory, warm and welcoming. We hold weekly services in South Orange as well as holiday services and celebrations which are completely lay led. We welcome all to our services and programs from non-Hebrew readers to Jewish communal and education professionals.

Naso in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/2166/jewish/Naso-in-a-Nutshell.htm

Completing the headcount of the Children of Israel taken in the Sinai Desert, a total of 8,580 Levite men between the ages of 30 and 50 are counted in a tally of those who will be doing the actual work of transporting the Tabernacle.

G-d communicates to Moses the law of the sotah, the wayward wife suspected of unfaithfulness to her husband. Also given is the law of the nazir, who forswears wine, lets his or her hair grow long, and is forbidden to become contaminated through contact with a dead body. Aaron and his descendants, the kohanim, are instructed on how to bless the people of Israel.

The leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel each bring their offerings for the inauguration of the altar. Although their gifts are identical, each is brought on a different day and is individually described by the Torah.

Haftarah in a Nutshell: Judges 13:2-25

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/681090/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's haftarah describes the birth of Samson, a lifetime nazirite. A condign haftarah for this week's reading, which discusses all the laws of the nazirite. Manoah and his wife, members of the Tribe of Dan, were childless. One day an angel appeared to Manoah's wife, informing her that she will give birth to a child. This child, the angel instructed, was to be a lifetime Nazirite. In addition, the angel instructed her to abstain from all foods forbidden to a nazirite — such as wine or ritually impure foods — from the moment she would conceive. The angel further informed the woman that her son will save the Jewish people from the Philistine oppression they were enduring at that time.

The soon-to-be-mother told her husband the good news. He entreated G-d to send His messenger again — they were unaware at the time that the messenger was an angel. G-d sent the angel again, and he repeated his instructions. Manoah and his wife then invited the angel to partake of a special meal they would prepare, but he declined. Instead he encouraged Manoah to offer the goat he wished to slaughter for the meal as a sacrifice to G-d. The angel then ascended to the heavens in the flame that devoured the sacrifice.

The *haftarah* ends with the birth of Samson: "And the lad grew, and G-d blessed him."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Politics of Envy (Naso 5781) by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z”l

<https://rabbisacks.org/naso-5781/>

Few things in the Torah are more revolutionary than its conception of leadership. Ancient societies were hierarchical. The masses were poor and prone to hunger and disease. They were usually illiterate. They were exploited by rulers as a means to wealth and power rather than treated as people with individual rights – a concept born only in the seventeenth century. At times they formed a corvée, a vast conscripted labour force, often used to construct monumental buildings intended to glorify kings. At others they were dragooned into the army to further the ruler’s imperial designs.

Rulers often had absolute power of life and death over their subjects. Not only were kings and pharaohs heads of state; they also held the highest religious rank, as they were considered children of the gods or even demigods themselves. Their power had nothing to do with the consent of the governed. It was seen as written into the fabric of the universe. Just as the sun ruled the sky and the lion ruled the animal realm, so kings ruled their populations. That was how things were in nature, and nature itself was sacrosanct.

The Torah is a sustained polemic against this way of seeing things. Not just kings but all of us, regardless of colour, culture, class or creed, are in the image and likeness of God. In the Torah, God summons His special people, Israel, to take the first steps towards what might eventually become a truly egalitarian society – or to put it more precisely, a society in which dignity, kavod, does not depend on power or wealth or an accident of birth.

Hence the concept, which we will explore more fully in parshat Korach, of leadership as service. The highest title accorded to Moses in the Torah is that of eved Hashem, “a servant of God” (Deut. 34:5). His highest praise is that he was “very humble, more so than anyone else on earth” (Num. 12:3). To lead is to serve. Greatness is humility. As the book of Proverbs puts it, “A man’s pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honour” (Prov. 29:23).

The Torah points us in the direction of an ideal world, but it does not assume that we have reached it yet or even that we are within striking distance. The people Moses led, like many of us today, were still prone to fixate on ambition, aspiration, vanity, and self-indulgence. They still had the human desire for honour and status. And Moses had to recognise that fact. It would be a major source of conflict in the months and years ahead. It is one of the primary themes of the book of Bamidbar. Of whom were the Israelites jealous? Most of them did not aspire to be Moses. He was, after all, the man who spoke to God and to whom God spoke. He performed miracles, brought plagues against the Egyptians, divided the Red Sea, and gave

the people water from a rock and manna from heaven. Few would have had the hubris to believe they could do any of these things.

But they did have reason to resent the fact that religious leadership seemed to be confined to only one tribe, Levi, and one family within that tribe, the Kohanim, male descendants of Aaron. Now that the Tabernacle was to be consecrated and the people were about to begin the second half of their journey, from Sinai to the Promised Land, there was a real risk of envy and animosity.

That is a constant throughout history. We desire, said Shakespeare, “this man’s gift and that man’s scope.” Aeschylus said, “It is in the character of very few men to honour without envy a friend who has prospered.”[1] Goethe warned that although “hatred is active, and envy passive dislike; there is but one step from envy to hate.” Jews should know this in their very bones. We have often been envied, and all too frequently has that envy turned to hate, with tragic consequences.

Leaders need to be aware of the perils of envy, especially within the people they lead. This is one of the unifying themes of the long and apparently disconnected parsha of Naso. In it we see Moses confronting three potential sources of envy. The first lay within the tribe of Levi. Its members had reason to resent the fact that priesthood had gone to just one man and his descendants: Aaron, Moses’ brother. The second had to do with individuals who were neither of the tribe of Levi nor of the family of Aaron but who felt that they had the right to be holy in the sense of having a special, intense relationship with God in the way that the priests had. The third had to do with the leadership of the other tribes who might have felt left out of the service of the Tabernacle. We see Moses dealing sequentially with all these potential dangers.

First, he gives each Levitical clan a special role in carrying the vessels, furnishings, and framework of the Tabernacle whenever the people journeyed from place to place. The most sacred objects were to be carried by the clan of Kohath. The Gershonites were to carry the cloths, coverings, and drapes. The Merarites were to carry the planks, bars, posts, and sockets that made up the Tabernacle’s framework. Each clan was, in other words, to have a special role and place in the solemn procession as the house of God was carried through the desert.

Next, Moses deals with individuals who aspire to a higher level of holiness. This, it seems, is the underlying logic of the Nazirite, the individual who vows to set himself apart for the Lord (Numbers 6:2). He was not to drink wine or any other grape product; he was not to have his hair cut; and he was not defile himself through contact with the dead. Becoming a Nazirite was, it seems, a way of temporarily assuming the kind of set-apartness associated with the priesthood, a voluntary extra degree of holiness.[2]

Lastly, Moses turns to the leadership of the tribes. The highly repetitive chapter 7 of our parsha itemises the offerings of each of the tribes on the occasion of the dedication of the altar. Their offerings were identical, and the Torah could have

abbreviated its account by describing the gifts brought by one tribe and stating that each of the other tribes did likewise. Yet the sheer repetition has the effect of emphasising the fact that each tribe had its moment of glory. Each, by giving to the house of God, acquired its own share of honour.

These episodes are not the whole of Naso but they consist of enough of it to signal a principle that every leader and every group needs to take seriously. Even when people accept, in theory, the equal dignity of all, and even when they see leadership as service, the old dysfunctional passions die hard. People still resent the success of others. They still feel that honour has gone to others when it should have gone to them. Rabbi Elazar HaKappar said: “Envy, lust and the pursuit of honour drive a person out of the world.”[3]

The fact that these are destructive emotions does not stop some people – perhaps most of us – feeling them from time to time, and nothing does more to put at risk the harmony of the group. That is one reason why a leader must be humble. They should feel none of these things. But a leader must also be aware that not everyone is humble. Every Moses has a Korach, every Julius Caesar a Cassius, every Duncan a Macbeth, every Othello an Iago. In many groups there is a potential troublemaker driven by a sense of injury to their self-esteem. These are often a leader’s deadliest enemies and they can do great damage to the group.

There is no way of eliminating the danger entirely, but Moses in this week’s parsha tells us how to behave. **Honour everyone equally. Pay special attention to potentially disaffected groups. Make each feel valued. Give everyone a moment in the limelight if only in a ceremonial way. Set a personal example of humility. Make it clear to all that leadership is service, not a form of status. Find ways in which those with a particular passion can express it, and ensure that everyone has a chance to contribute.**

There is no failsafe way to avoid the politics of envy but there are ways of minimising it, and our parsha is an object lesson in how to do so.

[1] Aeschylus, Agamemnon I.832. [2] See Maimonides, Hilchot Shemittah ve-Yovel 13:13.

[3] Mishnah Avot 4:21.

[From God, With Love – Naso 5781 by Rabbi Yitz Greenberg](https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/GreenbergParashatNaso5781.pdf?utm_campaign=Dvar%20Torah%205781&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=128228057&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9SClyxztFOkLqrXo7ZkloyCXETJ-aEfr3zoZenbKSJSNICONGLX-83QarPMBdtY7OOco_-WJEFNclBuXuzIk25urX4xw&utm_content=128228057&utm_source=hs_email)

https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/GreenbergParashatNaso5781.pdf?utm_campaign=Dvar%20Torah%205781&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=128228057&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9SClyxztFOkLqrXo7ZkloyCXETJ-aEfr3zoZenbKSJSNICONGLX-83QarPMBdtY7OOco_-WJEFNclBuXuzIk25urX4xw&utm_content=128228057&utm_source=hs_email

Parashat Naso contains the instructions and text of the priestly blessing, recited daily in the Temple by the priests, and then carried over into the synagogue liturgy. In the modern practice (often called *dukhenin*), the priests recite the blessing, antiphonally, word by word with the *hazzan*. In Israel, this is done daily in

the morning prayers; in Diaspora, on holidays only. The Conservative movement largely stopped this practice—whether it be out of distancing to rituals associated with the Temple or because some more traditional Conservative rabbis felt their lay people were often non-observant so they should not exercise this special “sacramental” role. In some Orthodox synagogues, non-observant priests are encouraged not to go up for *dukhenin*.

This approach is regrettable because the Torah makes clear that the priest is **not** personally blessing the people. Rather, the priest is channeling God’s blessing: “They [the priests] shall put My name on the children of Israel and I [God] will bless them” (Numbers 6:27). I have always felt there was an important positive message that God uses both righteous people and sinners to bless the people. This checks any self-righteous tendencies which can develop among observant Jews. It also reassures sinners—we are all sinners at some point in our lives¹—that God has not rejected or dismissed them. God loves them and invites them to serve God’s good purposes. Maimonides rules that, aside from idolatry, there is only one sin that can disqualify a *kohen* from participating in this divine service: killing another person (intentionally or unintentionally). Life is the highest Jewish value and only a violation of the ultimate reverence for life can make one unfit to serve as God’s messenger of the blessing.²

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik calls our attention to another unique and special requirement for blessing the people. To be valid—to fulfill the *mitzvah*—the priests must give the blessing **with love**. As stated in the preamble blessing the priests recite before uttering the actual words of the priestly blessing, “Blessed are you Loving God, our Lord Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with the sanctity of Aaron³ and commanded to bless His people, Israel, **with love**.” Rabbi Soloveitchik points out that there is no other blessing on a commandment that specifies that one must do it with love in order for it to be a valid performance.⁴

To understand this requirement of love, we must analyze again the nature of the blessing and who is giving it. The priestly blessing was not created by the Rabbis to precede the performance of a good deed or a ritual action. For example, *ha-motzi*: “Blessed are You, Loving God, our Lord Ruler of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.” The priests are also not uttering words or giving a blessing to the people in the congregation. This blessing is being bestowed by God onto people; the priests are merely conduits for God’s outreach to the people.

The priestly blessing is grounded in the blessings which God showered on living things when they made their appearance during the evolution of Creation. After each stage/day, God pronounces “it is good.”⁵ God loves Creation and all God’s

creatures.⁶ When God sees the emergence of life, God is overjoyed and responds lovingly with a call for “give me more,” i.e. “be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters and the birds shall multiply on earth” (Genesis 1:22). The blessing that God bestows on life is not words, but **vitality**. Out of love, God radiates good energy and power of replication and increase to all living creatures. The Kabbalah insists that these channels of connection between the Divine and human are universally present. The divine energy sustains all living things; all are rooted or embedded in the ground of God.

The High Holidays liturgy notes that God is “*Melekh hafez ba-hayyim* / the Ruler who lusts for life.” When life advances and land animals make their appearance, followed by the most developed form of life, human beings, God’s delight overflows. Again God lovingly blesses life.⁷ The Divine radiates the energy of reproduction and replication because God wants more life—more quantity, and more quality of life. God’s love embraces life and stimulates its growth.

This, then, is the blessing transmitted by the priests. The priests have no independent power of bestowing blessings to serve as a kind of amulet for people. And yet, the sense of direct connection to God, the channels which link the visible and invisible realms and which transfer energy and vitality between them are “lost” or obscured by all the sensations and experiences of daily life. The tabernacle/Temple is a place created to cut out the static and concentrate the mind of the pilgrim to “tune in” to the Divine Presence. Evil, death, and injustice also block the connection. As it were, they dam up the flow of love, and distract individuals from penetrating the surface to meet the Divine Ground in which everything exists.⁸

What the priest must do, says Rabbi Soloveitchik, is empty him- or herself of the anger, judgment, jealousy, and enmity that he or she may feel toward members of the congregation or toward the people in his or her life. If the priest will exclude the emotional blocks and barriers and respond with generalized love, the divine effusion of compassion, care, and love will flow through the priest and reach the congregants, or anyone who is focused to receive the blessing or energy, as well as the grace, forgiveness, and esteem which is embedded in the divine love. It takes a tremendous effort for the priest to overcome the self-centeredness, envy, or begrudging of the other that operates in day to day life. But if the effort is made and the love “plugged in” then, a finite, flawed human receptacle can pass on and channel the unlimited love of the Infinite God and the delight which the Lord feels in every display of life’s capacities and human goodness. Thus, the liturgical apparatus strengthens the forces of life and the vitality of life in the world. Shabbat Shalom.

¹ "There is no righteous person on earth that does [only] good and never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20).
² Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Tefillah u-Birkat Koahnim 15:3. On of reverence for life as a defining feature of the priesthood, see my essay on Parashat Tetzaveh, "On the Priesthood, Or: Holiness is Living in the Fullness of Life," available here: <https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/priesthood>.
³ Aaron was a member of the Levite tribe, as was his brother, Moses. He (and all his descendants after him) was consecrated to the status of priesthood and the priestly roles in Temple worship, sacrifices, and blessings. See Leviticus 8 for the consecration ceremonies which preceded the consecrating of the Tabernacle.
⁴ Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *On Repentance (Al Ha-Teshuvah)*, edited by Pinchas Peli (Koren Maggid Series: Jerusalem, 2017) pp. 72-75.
⁵ Genesis 1:3,10,12,18,21,25,31.
⁶ "God is good to all, [because] God's mother love (*rah_{am}av*, related to *rehem* = womb) is on [i.e. extended to] all God's creatures" (Psalm 145:9).
⁷ "God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fertile and increase, fill the earth....'" (Genesis 1:28).
⁸ For death as an interruption in the covenant and flow of God's blessings, see my essay on Parashat Vayikra, "The Pollution of Non-Acts," available here: <https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/pollution-non-acts>.

How Clothing Conveys Value, Rebuke, and Resurrection in the Bible by Dr. Ruhama Weiss, Ph.D.

<https://reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study/torah-commentary/how-clothing-conveys-value-rebuke-and-resurrection-bible>

The Torah portion, Naso, refers extensively to laws regarding the unfaithful wife:

"If any man's wife has gone astray and broken faith with her husband ... and there is no witness against her ... the husband shall bring his wife to the priest. And he shall bring as an offering for her ... The priest shall take sacral water in an earthen vessel and, taking some of the earth that is on the floor of the Tabernacle, the priest shall put it into the water. ... the priest shall bare the woman's head ... The priest shall adjure the woman, saying to her: ... if you have not gone astray in defilement while married to your husband, be immune to harm from this water of bitterness ... But if you have gone astray while married to your husband... may this water that induces the spell enter your body, causing the belly to distend and the thigh to sag." (Num. 5:12-22)

It is hard to say anything positive about this law, and I'm not motivated to try to do so. I want to focus my critical reading of this law on one detail that may, at first read, look marginal: the part in the ceremony when "the priest shall bare the woman's head "(Num. 5:18).

The importance of this detail is that it is not part of the "test" but rather part of the punishment. This public humiliation of the wife takes place even though, according to the Bible, the examination has not yet happened.

The Sages of the Mishnah understood this as a major component of the punishment. Unfortunately, they chose to describe the "ritual" in a way that increases this element of physical humiliation to a level that seems to me like a public rape. We read:

"If there were golden jewels on her, necklaces, nose-rings and finger-rings, they remove them from her so as to disgrace her. And after that he takes a twisted rope and ties it above her breasts. And all those who wish to see, come to see... And all the women are permitted to see her, as it says "And all the women will be warned not to act according to your lewdness." (Eze. 23:48) (Mishnah Sotah 1:6)

What is so important about clothes and why is nudity considered humiliating?

At the point in time when these laws were formulated, a person had one, maybe two, sets of clothing. if any at all. A woman brought her clothes with her from her father's house to her husband's house, and they were counted as value in her ketubah. A loss or absence of clothing indicated a loss of worth and stature. Thick, quality cloth was the only protection people had from winter weather. When worn thin by the summer sun, when made threadbare from years of use, the remnants of a garment were so precious, they were repurposed for some other use.

The Bible of clothing

It's possible to read the entire Bible through the prism of clothing, starting with the fig leaf garments of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:7) through the coat of many colors Jacob makes for Joseph (Gen. 37:3) to Potiphar's wife's deceptive use of that very same garment (Gen. 39:12-18). Torah bids us to remember each night the obligation to return to the poor their clothing taken as collateral "for that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin; in what shall he sleep!?" (Ex. 22:25-26). The theme continues in Prophets, beginning with the small jackets that Hannah brings to her growing son Samuel each year (I Samuel 2:19) to the cloaks of prophets and kings that are torn during their disagreements and on to the multicolored coats that virgin daughters of the king wear. Specifically, there is the coat that Tamar tore off her body after being raped by Amnon (II Sam. 13:18-19), resonating with the priest's similar act in the ritual of the unfaithful wife — only in this case, the woman, Tamar, uncovers herself.

How will we wake up after the resurrection?

Maybe you haven't considered this question, but the ancient Queen Cleopatra did, as we read:

"Queen Cleopatra asked Rabbi Meir: 'I know that the dead will be resurrected as it is written 'they blossom out of the city like grass of the earth' (Psalms 72:16), but will they be revived naked or clothed?' He (Rabbi Meir) said to her (Queen Cleopatra): 'I offer you a fortiori answer from wheat. Wheat is planted naked yet sprouts with several layers of clothing. All the more so the righteous who are buried dressed, will be revived (fully) clothed' "
(Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 90b).

Now we can relax, knowing that if we awake with the resurrection of the dead, we will not need to suffer the sight of streets full of confused, naked people!

I'm putting aside the amusing thought that the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra (the famous seventh one, who lived from 51 BCE to 12 BCE) could have conversed with Rabbi Meir (who lived in the second century CE). To do so, she herself would have had to have been resurrected from the dead! Instead, I will try to understand if there is some greater cultural or theological significance to this fabricated dialogue before them.

Reflections on nakedness and shame

Rabbi Meir rules that we will be reborn clothed, just like wheat. He is trying to say that covering our bodies will transform from a cultural activity to a biological reality. It seems likely that Rabbi Meir is proposing that God will be more alert to the need and wisely skip over the belief in the possibility of innocence by creating us fully dressed.

May it be God's will that we won't be like wheat

On the culture of honor and shame that may be contained in Rabbi Meir's answer to Cleopatra, 15th century Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, better known as the Maharal of Prague and associated with the legend of creating the Golem, explains:

"But the resurrection will be entirely honorable for humanity, as they will revive fully dressed and will not be naked, and this teaches of complete honor. And he said, because he is 'all the more so than wheat'. That is to say, a person is born naked and disgraceful because the body is created from a putrid drop (of semen), and therefore contains disgrace and is born naked. But the wheat does not come from a putrid drop (of semen), only from clean wheat. Therefore it emerges 'with several layers of clothing', and does not emerge disgracefully." (the Maharal of Prague, Ner Mitzvah [on Hanukkah])

With the resurrection of the dead, God will free us of our nakedness, we will not have sex, we will not be ashamed, and with that our bodies will be redeemed.

I love the idea of the resurrection of the dead (even while I choose not to believe in it), because I understand it as expressing an appreciative, even religious relationship to the human body; because it is an important foundational pillar in the Talmudic endeavor to worship God by means of our bodies; because it seriously suggests a bold and material commentary on the term "image of God."

Back to the ceremony of the unfaithful wife

In a world where the sexual urges, at least those of women, cause anger and embarrassment, we should not be surprised to find such an amount of aggression toward a woman who dared to give freedom to her sexual desires. Therefore, humiliation would take place in the cultural language of the community, exposing the body of the woman who listened to her body. Let us hope we do not need to wait for the resurrection of the dead to feel safe.

Let us know no more sorrow... Shabbat Shalom! (This article was translated with the help of Uzi Bar Pinchas. Dr. Ruhama Weiss, Ph.D. is the director of the Blaustein Center for Pastoral Counseling at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem.)

Using the Text To Create Protections For Women by Rabbi Jordana Chernow-Reader

<https://reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study/torah-commentary/how-clothing-conveys-value-rebuke-and-resurrection-bible>

I agree with Dr. Weiss about the deeply troubling nature of this text in Parashat Naso, and appreciate these insights.

I also find the sotah ritual deeply problematic and misogynistic. If a husband suspects his wife has been unfaithful, he can accuse her of being an adulterer and subject her to a humiliating ordeal. During this demeaning ritual, the wife is stripped of control over her body and lacks agency over her own life. She becomes a passive recipient of decisions made by the men around her without any active role in the process. The accused wife has no opportunity to speak, deny the charges, or defend herself. This is especially troubling because the ritual impacts her body and can result in the termination of a pregnancy. According to Numbers 5:12-28, if a woman miscarries as a result of it, instead of supporting her, this confirms her guilt of infidelity.

In the context of the text, through marriage a husband acquires exclusive sexual rights to his wife. The converse was not true, since husbands could have more than one wife (Tirzah Meacham, “Legal-Religious Status of the Suspected Adulteress (Sotah),” Jewish Women’s Archive), While the sotah ritual is included in the Torah, it is unclear if it ever took place. (Lisa Grushcow, *The Torah: A Women’s Torah Commentary*, p. 839). It is described without referencing a particular incident in contrast to other the laws in the Torah (ibid.). It was abolished towards the end of Second Temple Period by Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai (Judith Hauptman, *The Torah: A Women’s Torah Commentary*, p. 837).

I hope the sotah ritual was never used, but I believe that within these disturbing lines are important messages for us. I argue it is cautioning us against creating situations that impact a women’s body without her consent. In Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kama 90a:13-14 we read: “if he [one who] uncovers the head of a woman he must give the injured party four hundred dinars” (see David Polsky, “#timesup or Behind the Times? #metoo Meets the Talmud,” sefaria.org). About the same incident in Bava Kama 90b:1-5, Rabbi Akiva rendered the assailant liable to give her four hundred dinars.” Here, the text sides with the woman who suffered because control over her body was taken away from her. On empowering women to make choices for themselves a recent statement from the CCAR reads: “We believe ... each person (is entitled) to follow her own inner compass when making decisions about her (reproductive) health free from constraints or impediments” (“Faith Groups Express Concern on Kavanaugh Nomination,” CCAR).

There are efforts underway in our in our time to reduce women’s agency and ability to make decisions about their bodies. I believe the message of the sotah ritual encourages us to do better for women. It teaches us not to harm to women as

the sotah ritual did, but to ensure women have the power to make their own choices. The Torah passage about the sotah ritual is our text as its worst, but it challenges us to create protections for women so we can all live at our best.

(Rabbi Jordana Chernow-Reader is the rabbi educator at Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple in Beachwood, OH.)

Yahrtzeits

Due to the Shavuot holiday on Monday May 17th, the Yahrzeit's of the week of May 15th are repeated this week along with the Yahrzeit's of the week of May 22nd.

Remembrances for all will be offered on Monday May 24th.

Mike Schatzberg remembers his mother Marion Schatzberg on Saturday May 15th (Sivan 4).

Neil Fox remembers his mother Jeanette Fox (Hannah) Monday May 17th (Sivan 6)

Gail Yazersky remembers her father Martin Yazersky on Wednesday May 19th (Sivan 8)

Lisa Small remembers her mother Ruby Small (Rivkah Bat Eta Esther) on Wednesday May 19th (Sivan 8)

Mel Zwillenberg remembers Susan's father Gerald Altman (Yosef Shmuel) on Thursday May 20th (Sivan 9)

Erwin Mevorah remembers his father Chaim Mevorah on Wednesday May 26th (Sivan 15).

Nikki Pusan and Russett Feldman remember their mother Mildred Monheit Pusin on Friday May 28th (Sivan 17)

Coming up at Kol Rina

Friday Torah Study and Service via Zoom, May 21, 2021

Our Friday evening observances will begin at 5:15 with Torah study led by Len Levin. Kabbalat Shabbat, led by Nikki Pusin, and Maariv, led by Len Levin, will follow, beginning at 5:45. Linda Dorf will speak to us on "Philadelphia Artist H.A. Pinkowitz: War, Community, and Assimilation." We hope you will join us!

Use the following Zoom link to attend:

<https://zoom.us/j/533517572?pwd=dVFHR2NGZFBCYWp1Yzd6ald0bzFRdz09>

May 23: Brunch-and-Learn: An Environmental Tour of Israel

Tour guide Hava Erlichman-Voliovich will introduce us to the natural environment of Israel

through three topics: Water usage and treatment; urban ecology; and birds and wildlife. She will discuss Israel's environmental challenges as well as its remarkable accomplishments.

A native Israeli, Hava Erlichman-Voliovich studied Linguistics and Geography at the Hebrew University. After working for many years in High Tech, she followed her passion to become a certified Israel tour guide and has been leading tours full-time for the past five years. She is enthusiastically looking forward to meeting us.

The program will take place via Zoom on **May 23 at 10:30 am**. [Click here](#) to register via Eventbrite.

Monday evening minyan, May 24

Our regular weekday evening minyan will take place on Monday, May 10, beginning at 8:00. Your presence allows mourners and those observing yahrzeits to say Kaddish. Please support your Kol Rina friends by attending. Please note that in light of the fact that there was no weekday evening service last week, people who observed yahrzeits last week will also be invited to share remembrances on May 24.

Use the following Zoom link to attend:

<https://zoom.us/j/97663987468?pwd=NjFhaVZUZkpSZ3pxQWJjOU5UWFR4QT09>