

## Lunchtime Torah Express-Naso

### Numbers 5:11-15

(11) יהוה spoke to Moses, saying: (12) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: Any party whose wife has gone astray and broken faith with him, (13) in that another man has had carnal relations with her unbeknown to her husband, and she keeps secret the fact that she has defiled herself without being forced, and there is no witness against her, (14) but a fit of jealousy comes over him and he is wrought up about the wife who has defiled herself—or if a fit of jealousy comes over him and he is wrought up about his wife although she has not defiled herself— (15) that party shall bring his wife to the priest. And he shall bring as an offering for her one-tenth of an *ephah* of barley flour. No oil shall be poured upon it and no frankincense shall be laid on it, for it is a meal offering of jealousy, a meal offering of remembrance which recalls wrongdoing.

### במדבר ה': י"א-ט"ו

(יא) וידבר יהוה אל-משה  
לאמר: (יב) דבר אל-בני ישראל  
ואמרת אליהם איש איש  
כִּי־תִשְׁטֶה אִשְׁתּוֹ וּמַעַלָּה בּוֹ  
מַעַל: (יג) וְשָׁכַב אִישׁ אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה  
שֶׁכֶּבֶת־זָרָע וְנִעְלָם מֵעֵינַי אִשָּׁה  
וְנִסְתָּרָה וְהִיא נֹטְמָאָה וְעַד אֵין  
בָּהּ וְהוּא לֹא נִתְפָּשָׁה: (יד) וְעָבַר  
עָלֶיהָ רוּחַ־קִנְאָה וְקִנָּא אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ  
וְהִיא נֹטְמָאָה אוֹ־עָבַר עָלֶיהָ  
רוּחַ־קִנְאָה וְקִנָּא אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ  
וְהִיא לֹא נֹטְמָאָה: (טו) וְהָבִיָּא  
הָאִישׁ אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן  
וְהָבִיָּא אֶת־קֶרְבָּנָהּ עֲשִׂירֶת  
הָאֵיפָה קֶמַח שְׁעָרִים לֹא־יִצֶק  
עָלֶיהָ שֶׁמֶן וְלֹא־יִתֵּן עָלֶיהָ לִבְנָהּ  
כִּי־מִנְחַת קִנְאָת הוּא מִנְחַת  
זִכְרוֹן מִזִּפְרֹת עוֹן:

### Numbers 5:16-19

(16) The priest shall bring her forward and have her stand before (17) יהוה. 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. (18) After he has made the woman stand before יהוה, the priest shall bare the woman's head and place upon her hands the meal offering of remembrance, which is a meal offering of jealousy. And in the priest's hands shall be the water of bitterness that induces the spell. (19) The priest shall adjure the woman,

### במדבר ה': ט"ז-י"ט

(טז) וְהִקְרִיב אֹתָהּ הַכֹּהֵן  
וְהָעֲמִידָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: (יז) וְלָקַח  
הַכֹּהֵן מִיַּם קֹדֶשִׁים בְּכִל־חֶרֶשׁ  
וּמִן־הָעֹפֹר אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בַּקֶּרֶקַע  
הַמִּשְׁכָּן יִקַּח הַכֹּהֵן וְנָתַן  
אֶל־הַמַּיִם: (יח) וְהָעֲמִידָה הַכֹּהֵן  
אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וּפָרַע  
אֶת־רֹאשׁ הָאִשָּׁה וְנָתַן עַל־כַּפֶּיהָ  
אֶת מִנְחַת הַזִּכְרוֹן מִנְחַת קִנְאָת  
הוּא וּבִיד הַכֹּהֵן יִהְיוּ מֵי הַמָּרִים  
הַמְאָרְרִים: (יט) וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ אֹתָהּ  
הַכֹּהֵן וְאָמַר אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה אִם־לֹא

saying to her, “If no other party has lain with you, if you have not gone astray in defilement while living in your husband’s household, be immune to harm from this water of bitterness that induces the spell.

שָׁכַב אִישׁ אִתְּךָ וְאִם־לֹא שָׁטִית  
טִמְאָה תַּחַת אִישׁךָ הִנְלִי מִמִּי  
הַמָּרִים הַמְּאָרְרִים הָאֵלֶּה:

#### Numbers 5:20-22

(20) But if you have gone astray while living in your husband’s household and have defiled yourself, if any party other than your husband has had carnal relations with you”— (21) here the priest shall administer the curse of adjuration to the woman, as the priest goes on to say to the woman—“may יהוה make you a curse and an imprecation among your people, as יהוה causes your thigh to sag and your belly to distend; (22) may this water that induces the spell enter your body, causing the belly to distend and the thigh to sag.” And the woman shall say, “Amen, amen!”

#### במדבר ה':כ'-כ"ב

(כ) וְאֵת כִּי שָׁטִית תַּחַת אִישׁךָ  
וְכִי נִטְמַאת וַיִּתֶּן אִישׁ בְּךָ  
אֶת־שִׁכְבְּתוֹ מִבְּלַעְדֵי אִישׁךָ:  
(כא) וְהַשְׁבִּיעַ הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה  
בְּשִׁבְעַת הָאֵלֶּה וְאָמַר הַכֹּהֵן  
לְאִשָּׁה יִתֵּן יְהוָה אוֹתְךָ לָאֵלֶּה  
וְלִשְׁבַּעַה בְּתוֹךְ עַמְּךָ בְּתַת יְהוָה  
אֶת־יֶרֶכְךָ נִפְלֹת וְאֶת־בִּטְנְךָ  
צָבָה: (כב) וּבָאוּ הַמַּיִם  
הַמְּאָרְרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּמַעְיָן לְצַבּוֹת  
בֶּטֶן וְלִנְפֹל יֶרֶךְ וְאָמְרָה הָאִשָּׁה  
אָמֵן | אָמֵן:

#### Numbers 5:23-26

(23) The priest shall put these curses down in writing and rub it off into the water of bitterness. (24) He is to make the woman drink the water of bitterness that induces the spell, so that the spell-inducing water may enter into her to bring on bitterness. (25) Then the priest shall take from the woman’s hand the meal offering of jealousy, elevate the meal offering before יהוה, and present it on the altar. (26) The priest shall scoop out of the meal offering a token part of it and turn it into smoke on the altar. Last, he shall make the woman drink the water.

#### במדבר ה':כ"ג-כ"ד

(כג) וְכָתַב אֶת־הָאֱלֹת הָאֵלֶּה  
הַכֹּהֵן בְּסֹפֶר וּמָחָה אֶל־מִי  
הַמָּרִים: (כד) וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה  
אֶת־מִי הַמָּרִים הַמְּאָרְרִים וּבָאוּ  
בָּהּ הַמַּיִם הַמְּאָרְרִים לְמָרִים:  
(כה) וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִיַּד הָאִשָּׁה אֶת  
מִנְחַת הַקִּנְאָה וְהִנִּיף אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה  
לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהִקְרִיב אֹתָהּ  
אֶל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: (כו) וְקָמַץ הַכֹּהֵן  
מִן־הַמִּנְחָה אֶת־אֹפְרֶתָהּ וְהִקְטִיר  
הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְאַחֵר יִשְׁקָה אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה  
אֶת־הַמַּיִם:

### Numbers 5:27-28

(27) Once he has made her drink the water—if she has defiled herself by breaking faith with her husband, the spell-inducing water shall enter into her to bring on bitterness, so that her belly shall distend and her thigh shall sag; and the wife shall become a curse among her people. (28) But if the woman has not defiled herself and is pure, she shall be unharmed and able to retain seed.

### בר ה' כ"ז-כ"ח

וְהִשְׁקָהּ אֶת־הַמַּיִם וְהִיתָה  
אִם־נִטְמָאָה וְתִמְעַל מַעַל  
בְּאִשָּׁהּ וּבָאוּ בָּהֶּם הַמַּיִם  
הַמְאָרִים לְמֵרִים וְצָבְתָה בִטְנָהּ  
וְנָפְלָה יֶרֶכָּהּ וְהִיתָה הָאִשָּׁה  
לְאֵלָהּ בְּקֶרֶב עַמָּהּ: (כח)  
וְאִם־לֹא נִטְמָאָה הָאִשָּׁה וְטָהֳרָה  
הִוא וְנִקְתָּה וְנִזְרְעָה זֶרַע:

### Numbers 5:29-31

(29) This is the ritual in cases of jealousy, when a woman goes astray while living in her husband's household, and defiles herself, (30) or when a fit of jealousy comes over a husband and he is wrought up over his wife: the woman shall be made to stand before יהוה and the priest shall carry out all this ritual with her. (31) The man shall be clear of guilt; but that woman shall suffer for her guilt.

### במדבר ה' כ"ט-ל"א

(כט) זֹאת תֹּוֹרַת הַקְּנָאֹת אֲשֶׁר  
תִּשְׁטָה אִשָּׁה תַּחַת אִישָׁהּ  
וְנִטְמָאָה: (ל) אִו אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר  
תַּעֲבֹר עָלָיו רוּחַ קְנָאָה וְקָנָא  
אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְהַעֲמִיד אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה  
לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וַעֲשֵׂה לָּהּ הַכֹּהֵן אֶת  
כָּל־הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת: (לא) וְנִקְתָּה  
הָאִישׁ מֵעוֹן וְהָאִשָּׁה הִהוּא תִשָּׂא  
אֶת־עוֹנָהּ: {פ}

### Hammurabi §129

If a man's wife is surprised (*in flagrante delicto*) with another man, both shall be tied and thrown into the water, but the husband may pardon his wife and the king his slaves.

### Hammurabi, §132

If the "finger is pointed" at a man's wife about another man, but she is not caught sleeping with the other man, she shall jump into the river for her husband.

### **Sifre Bemidbar, 7**

We derive the rule that divorce is the required recourse for a husband who has found his wife to be adulterous only in a case in which there are witnesses who establish the fact of adultery, and they did give prior warning to the wife, as to the ban and the punishment. But if there is a matter of doubt whether or not the woman has actually had sexual relations, we do not know the rule of what the man has to do to her. Accordingly, Scripture states: '[n]d the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: If any man's wife go aside. . . .' (Num. 5: 11–12)

Here, Scripture obliges her to drink the bitter water. For this purpose was this passage written.

### **Sotah 7a:19-7b:2**

And the priest grabs hold of her clothing and pulls them, unconcerned about what happens to the clothing. If the clothes are torn, so they are torn; if the stitches come apart, so they come apart. And he pulls her clothing until he reveals her heart, i.e., her chest. And then he unbraids her hair. Rabbi Yehuda says: If her heart was attractive he would not reveal it, and if her hair was attractive he would not unbraid it. If she was dressed in white garments, he would now cover her with black garments. If she was wearing gold adornments, or chokers [*katliyyot*], or nose rings, or finger rings, they removed them from her in order to render her unattractive.

And afterward the priest would bring an Egyptian rope fashioned from palm fibers, and he would tie it above her breasts. And anyone who desires to watch her may come to watch, except for her slaves and maidservants, who are not permitted to watch because her heart is emboldened by them, as seeing one's slaves reinforces one's feeling of pride, and their presence may cause her to maintain her innocence. And all of the women are permitted to watch her, as it is stated: "Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness" (Ezekiel 23:48).

### **Sotah 21b:1**

The mishna states: From here ben Azzai states: A person is obligated to teach his daughter Torah, so that if she drinks and does not die immediately, she will know that some merit of hers has delayed her punishment. Rabbi Eliezer says: Anyone who

teaches his daughter Torah is teaching her promiscuity. The Gemara asks: Could it enter your mind to say that teaching one's daughter Torah is actually teaching her promiscuity? Rather, say: It is considered as if he taught her promiscuity.

**From Rabbi Lauren Eichler Berkun, "Redeeming the Sotah" at**

**<https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/redeeming-the-sotah/>** While it is certainly distressing to imagine biblical women inflicted with this humiliation and physical threat, I like to imagine this ordeal as one of the examples of biblical ingenuity. Let us note that the effects of the bitter waters are somewhat paradoxical. If the woman is guilty of adultery, she will become barren. If she is innocent, she will be fertile. Some interpret this verse to mean that she will get pregnant. In other words, the *sotah* trial will enable a jealous, suspicious husband to be assured that his wife's pregnancy is a sign of her faithfulness to him. Surely this bit of biblical "magic" was a way of maintaining *shalom-bayit* (a peaceful home) and a means for ascertaining clear lineage. The woman's pregnancy would be attributed solely to her husband.

**Jacob Milgrom, JPS Commentary**

Finally, that the suspected adulteress is not put to death either by man or God provides the necessary clue to explaining how an ordeal-with its inherent magical and pagan elements-was allowed to enter the legislation of the Torah, or to answer the paradox as it was phrased by Rambam: This is the only case in biblical law where the outcome depends on a miracle. The answer, I submit, is inherent in the ordeal. It provides the priestly legislator with an accepted practice by which he could remove the jurisdiction over and punishment of the unapprehended adulteress from human hands and thereby guarantee that she would not be put to death.

**Tractate Derekh Eretz Zuta, Section on Peace 9**

R. Yishmael said: Peace is so important that God let the Holy Name be erased by water in order to bring peace between a married couple.