

# Faithfulness in Marriage – Parshat Naso

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What is the proper marital relationship according to the Torah? Are we required to tell our spouses that we suspect they are not being completely faithful to us when we feel that their loyalty is not meeting up to our expectations? And how does the Torah direct us to do this? This is the subject of this week's *parsha*.

This week's Torah portion is called *parshat "Naso,"* and there are a few engaging topics in this *parsha*. One of the subjects addressed in this *parsha* is the topic of the "*Sota*" (a woman suspected of infidelity), a complicated, painful and astounding issue.

What is the background surrounding the whole topic of the *Sota*

in the Torah? At the time when the Temple was still standing, if a husband suspected that his wife had secretly secluded herself with another man after he had warned her not to do so, and if there were two witnesses who saw her being secluded with this man, the husband was required to bring his wife to the Temple before the *Kohen* (Priest). The *Kohen* would write down on a piece of parchment the verses in the Torah relating to the *Sota* and then erase what was written in holy waters. And he would warn her to tell the truth. If the woman denied that she had been unfaithful, the *Kohen* would then make the woman drink the waters.

And then one of two things would happen:

If the woman had indeed sinned and committed adultery, a horrifying reaction would take place: "her belly would be distended and her thigh would collapse," and she would die in anguish. "And the woman would become a curse amid her people" (Numbers 5:27).

But if the woman had not sinned and was as pure as she said she was, she would merit to a revelation of kindness from the Creator. If she had not yet had any children, she would become pregnant. If she had formerly given birth with pain and had ugly children, then she would now give birth easily and have handsome children.

There is no doubt that this ceremony was an extremely humiliating affair. Why would they disgrace a woman by embarrassing her publicly when she may have in fact been pure and not have sinned? And on the other hand, what is the logic that she should merit to a revelation of kindness if it becomes clear that she is pure? After all, didn't she sin by being secluded with another man?

This is an extremely sensitive issue. Today's media encourages women to be provocative and to actively attract attention to themselves. Worse yet, they continue to do this even after

they are married, and this is disastrous. The media presents these things as if they were concerned about a woman's freedom, independence, and honor, when in reality, the true honor of women is when she behaves in a discreet and modest manner. Being promiscuous is clearly the most disgraceful thing a woman can do. There is nothing more shameful than a woman who willingly forfeits her dignity, her inner self-worth, and her faithfulness. Whereas the media in 2021 has transformed the greatest form of dishonor into something respectful and to be proud of.

Let us consider the intelligence and the wisdom of the Torah and learn from its ways of pleasantness:

We will bring the words of *The Zohar* on the verse in the "Song of Songs": "For strong to the death is my love; for their seal for vengeance is hard as the grave" (Song of Songs 8:6). The Holy *Zohar* teaches (literally translated): "Any love which is not bound with jealousy is not love! When there is jealousy, then love reaches perfection. From here we learn that a man needs to be protective of his wife in order to be bound to her in perfect love. And this will cause him not to become interested in other women" (*Zohar, parshat Vayechi, Rama a*).

*Why would they disgrace a woman by embarrassing her publicly when she may have in fact been pure and not have sinned? After all, didn't she sin by being secluded with another man?*

The explanation is that many types of love are not perfect love. An example is the love that a person has for his friend, such that if his friend would behave badly towards him, he would not mention it to him and tell him how much his behavior bothered him. This is not perfect love. Regarding the love between a man and his wife, if the husband turns a blind eye and does not tell his wife when she is not acting properly, this is not true love. When a husband ignores his wife's reckless behavior, this causes both him and his wife to become

promiscuous, and the husband will lose all the trust he had in his wife!

A love in which there is no jealousy is not love. It is instead a "fake" love where the person only loves himself and is only worried about fulfilling his own desires. True love is only when the husband is protective of the love between himself and his wife and demands that his wife will be completely faithful to him. This type of envy is the only thing that will cause him not to be attracted to other women (according to the commentary of the *Matok M'Dvash* on these lines from *The Zohar*). These remarks are consistent with the words of our sages on the verse "The man will be innocent of iniquity" (Numbers 5:31) which are written regarding the affair of the *Sota*: "Only when the man himself is innocent of iniquity does the water test the woman."

It is known that the woman corresponds to the *sefirah* of *Malchut* (the Divine Emanation of Kingship) which is the lowest of all the *sefirot*. All the *sefirot* above it illuminate into the *sefirah* of *Malchut*. The *sefirah* of *Malchut* does not have its own source of light (spiritual energy and power). Similarly in the personal sphere, the husband (who corresponds to the *sefirot* of "*Zer Anpin*," which includes all the *sefirot* above *Malchut*) shines into his wife who is the aspect of *Malchut*. Her entire essence comes from the light and vitality that she receives exclusively from her husband.



There is no *sefirah* lower than the *sefirah* of *Malchut*. But there is something lower, and these are the forces of impurity known as “husks” (*kliptot*) and the “Other Side” (The *Sitra Achra*). These forces of impurity are unable to draw down energy from higher *sefirot*, so they invest all their efforts into drawing energy from the *sefirah* of *Malchut* which is adjacent to them. When the *sefirah* of *Malchut* is damaged by sin, “holes” are formed in it (like a sheet in which has holes in it), and spiritual sparks fall directly into the arms of the *kliptot* and the *Sitra Achra*.

This is why we see that the forces of impurity are always preoccupied with women, as an attempt to bring about immorality. Because as we said, the woman represents the *sefirah* of *Malchut*, and the *kliptot* which are adjacent to her are able to draw energy from her once she has been blemished.

We will now return to our *parsha*:

Once woman has connected her life to her husband (until his death or if she separates from him through divorce), only he can draw down vitality to his wife. Anyone else who, G-d forbid, tries to draw down vitality to her or give her attention undermines the basis of this couple’s marriage and

separates between them bringing about destruction and devastation. When a person sins, G-d forbid, with another woman, who is not connected to him, he supposedly draws down "vitality" to her. But since he is actually unable to give his vitality to a woman to whom he is not married, he damages the *sefirah* of *Malchut*, and the abundance and vitality that he would have given her go directly to the forces of impurity.

The *mitzvah* of the *Sota* is applicable only when the man has himself been faithful. He becomes jealous of his wife and wants that their bond will be a loving one. He is faithful to her and wants her to be faithful to him, despite the fact that she secluded herself with someone else, which in itself is considered a sin. But still, she has a few options to choose from:

Even if she has committed the ultimate sin, still she has hope and a chance for atonement by admitting her sin. The very shame and humiliation she experiences will atone for the grave sin, and she will be able to repent and be given a new lease on life.

But, if she continues to deny what she did and is not willing to admit her sin, or worse, if she is even unwilling to admit that her actions were deplorable—perhaps due to the influence of the environment ("the media" that we mentioned earlier), worrying about her freedom and "feminist rights"—then she will be dealt with according to the strictest judgement, without pity. The sin of being unfaithful to her husband and to the Creator—who planted in the woman the attribute of being pure and faithful to her husband—will bring on the severe punishment "and her abdomen shall be distended, her thigh shall collapse, and the woman shall become a curse amid her people" (Numbers 5:27).

The promiscuous world we live in today is incapable of accepting limitations and punishments. The freedom of women (to be immoral) is emphasized above all else. However, the

Creator despises promiscuity, and one will have to pay dearly for it, if not here in this world, then in the World to Come, as our sages said: "From the time when adulterers proliferated, the performance of the ritual of the bitter waters was nullified" (*Sota* 9:9). And in the World to Come, the punishment will be infinitely more severe.

And in the best case scenario, if the woman was not defiled and is pure...

Then, even though she had secluded herself improperly, which in and of itself is a sin, she will have kindness bestowed upon her. She will be rewarded with beautiful children and have easy births, because ultimately, the fact that she did not actually commit adultery combined with the humiliation she experienced has fully atoned for her unfitting behavior.

Now she can return to her husband and live with him without any suspicions hanging over his heart, as is fitting for the true love that can now bind them in marital unity.

(According to *Likutei Halachot, Gittin, Halachot* 3 and 4)