



Parashat Naso
Judges 13: 2-25
May 30, 2015 / 12 Sivan 5775

Imagine that you are sitting in a small circular auditorium eighteen hundred years ago along with your synagogue's Board of Directors. You are part of an elite group of men (at least we assume they were all men) who are deciding which haftarot should be paired with the weekly Torah readings. Now think about what went on with Democrats and Republicans in both the Senate and the House while attempting to pass the Health Care bill.

It is early fall and your committee is trying to match up appropriate texts for the book of Genesis. You have just matched up parshat lekh lekha and you have arrived at Va-yera. Va-yera tells the story of the God appearing to Abraham in the form of three messengers. One of them said to Abraham that he would return next year and that Sarah would give birth to a son. Sarah was listening, laughed and I suspect you know the rest of the story. If you would like to read it again, go to Genesis: Chapter 18: 9-14.

"I've got it" you said. Let's connect the story of the birth of Samson found in the book of Judges with the story of the birth of Isaac. Both sets of parents are visited by Divine messengers who predicts the birth of a son. It's a natural!"

"Good point," responded Rabbi Shmugiegie, but perhaps we should use the story of Samuel, after all, he was much more important a figure than Samson."

"I'm against using Samuel again," interjected Rabbi Pinhas. That Samuel story disparages the priesthood and I'm proud to be a Cohen, besides we already matched Samuel up with Rosh HaShana."

"Another one for the priesthood", someone murmured. "I think we should insert the story of Elisha and the Shumenite woman as the haftarah coinciding with the birth of Isaac, someone suggested. It has a fortelling of a birth, and what could be a resurrection, after all we do have that legend that Isaac was killed on Mount Moriah and re-born."

"Two good reasons," someone added.

"I am also in agreement:" a Rabbi Kahn added with a voice the reeked of dignity.

Another Cohen chimed in. "Let's put it to a vote."

You take a good look at the group. There are a lot of priests and landholders at the table. Most of your friends won't get off work for several hours. "But what about Samson, it's a great story?"

Rabbi Pinhas stroked his beard, looked thoughtful and suggested, "Samson was a Nazarite, let's match him up with Naso, after all that's where the laws of the Nazarite are found"

"But, but", you stutter, "we're not happy with Nazarites. We just concluded a major discussion in the Talmud that minimizes the impact that Nazarites and other fringe type of border line people can have. It could re-enforce their position in society."

"Correct" Rabbi Schmuggie responded. "But it works. We can always come back to it when we get to the book of Numbers".

And it just might have happened that way.

This week's Haftarah commentary is reprinted from one originally written for the Unraveller for May 22, 2010 by Rabbi Charles Simon, Executive Director of the FJMC and author of numerous books, including "Understanding the Haftarah. An Everyperson's Guide" and "The Non-Jewish Spouse: Strategies for Clergy and Lay Leadership". [Both of these books are available in the FJMC on-line store]