

VAYERA: JEWISH INFERTILITY AWARENESS SHABBAT

- A written-out sermon prepared and sponsored by Machon Puah Institute in Jerusalem

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PUAH INSTITUTE IN JERUSALEM

Dear Rabbi Shloush,

Thank you for sharing our enthusiasm in helping couples become parents.

Parshat Vayerah, as Rabbi Billet so wisely pointed out, is a wonderful Parsha to remind our communities of the great pain and need experienced by many couples within our community.

Close to 15% of the population experiences some type of infertility problem.

Chizuk and information are some of ways that we can offer help.
Thank you for sharing in this important mitzvah!

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Awareness Shabbat

Rav Menachem Burstein, head of the Puah Institute in Jerusalem, is calling upon the entire American Jewish community to observe this year's Parshat Vayerah, which falls on October 30, as "Jewish Continuity Shabbat."

Parshat Vayerah opens with Avraham seeing three men who he immediately invited into his home and served them food. Avraham was not initially aware that they were in fact angels sent by Hashem to give Avraham and his wife three important messages. One came to heal his wound, one came to inform him of the eventual fate of Sodom and Gemorrah, and one came to tell them that they would have a son, a biological heir who would continue the holy work of spreading the Torah to the entire world.

We only imagine the joy that Avraham and Sarah must have felt. They had been married for so many years and, despite all their great faith and trust in Hashem, they had all but given up their desire to have their own children. Avraham saw Eliezer or Yishmael as his heirs, Sarah laughed when she heard and could hardly believe that it could happen. They were finally to have a baby, to experience pregnancy, birth and the challenge but joy of raising a child. Their joy knew no

bounds; even his name would be called Yitzchak, laughter.

When the angel wanted to tell Avraham this stunning piece of news he first asked him “Where is Sarah, your wife?” The answer came back “She is in the tent.”

The Gemara in Baba Metzia questions the need for such an inquiry; after all, they knew that Sarah was in the tent. Rather, the angel wanted to show Avraham how special his wife was that she had such modesty to remain in the tent and not appear before the strangers. This was to endear her in his eyes.

Yet this piece of Gemara itself needs some explanation. After all, Avraham and Sarah were in their nineties and had been married for decades, we can assume that Avraham knew very well all of his wife’s good characteristics and qualities. Did the angel really need to show Avraham how special Sarah was? Does the Torah have to add a verse to tell us this point?

The Torah is teaching us an essential lesson about the connection between husband and wife. Even after many many years of marriage they still need to find each others good points, they still need to recognize the special qualities and traits that each has and they is always room for others to bring them close to each other.

This is doubly important when the couple is suffering from a fertility problem that naturally adds pressure to their relationship. The couple needs to invest in each other and use this challenge to cement their relationship together. If there are others who can assist them then they are true angels who come to show a husband the special qualities of his wife and the wife the unique nature of her husband.

May each and every one of us have the zchus to help couples become parents and alleviate their difficult paths.

Based in Jerusalem, Puah Institute offers counseling on halachic and medical issues relating to fertility treatments, gynecology, pregnancy, marital intimacy, and family purity.