

Israeli woman potential Nobel chemistry winner

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(AP) -- If Nobel judges are looking to improve the balance of women winning the chemistry prize, Israeli scientist Ada Yonath could be a strong candidate when the award is announced Wednesday.

Yonath's pioneering work in understanding how cells build proteins could make her a contender, possibly along with American George Feher. In 2006 the two shared the Wolf Prize in chemistry, which can sometimes serve as a barometer of future Nobel winners.

Only three women have won the [Nobel Prize](#) in chemistry and none since 1964 when Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin of Britain received the prize for her work using "X-ray techniques of the structures of important biochemical substances."

Other possible candidates include Americans Stuart Schreiber and Gerald Crabtree for research in chemical biology that has shed light on how tiny molecules can be used on cell circuits and signaling pathways.

If the prize committee turns to nanotechnology, Scottish chemist Sir James Fraser Stoddart could be a winner, possibly with Japan's Sumio Iijima, who discovered carbon nanotubes in 1991.

Nanotechnology involves research at an atomic level that seeks to create smaller and more powerful devices and systems in a wide range of areas, from food production to health care products and military equipment.

The Nobel Prizes in the scientific disciplines are difficult to guess because the prize committees don't reveal nominations for 50 years and because the discoveries awarded were often made decades ago. Mans Ehrenberg, a member of the chemistry prize committee, said a lot of worthy researchers never win the prize because the judges have so many discoveries to choose from.

"There are more people who deserve to win than there are prizes," Ehrenberg said.

The chemistry award will be the third Nobel Prize to be announced this year.

On Monday, three American scientists shared the Nobel Prize in medicine for discovering a key mechanism in the genetic operations of cells, an insight that has inspired new lines of research into cancer and aging. The physics prize on Tuesday went to three other Americans who created the technology behind digital photography and helped link the world through fiber-optic networks.

The prize in literature and the Nobel Peace Prize will be announced later this week, and the economics award will be presented Monday.

The Nobel Prizes include a 10 million kronor (\$1.4 million) award, diploma and medal and an invitation to prize ceremony in Stockholm on Dec. 10, the anniversary of award founder Alfred Nobel's death in 1896.

U.S. and Japanese scientists have dominated the [chemistry](#) award in recent years. Last year's prize was shared by Osaka Shimomura of Japan and U.S. researchers Martin Chalfie and Roger Tsien.

Tsien said one of the biggest changes he experienced after winning the Nobel was that he now receives more invitations to speak around the

world and attend conferences, "often on subjects I have no expertise in."

His advice to this year's winners - whomever they may be - would be to keep their feet firmly on the ground.

"Remember that one is not any smarter or more virtuous after the award announcement than before," Tsien said.

On the Net:

Nobel Prizes: <http://www.nobelprize.org>

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