

## Birth: Human, Nation, Trees

Tazri'a begins with the shortest perek in the Torah - Vayikra 12 has 8 p'sukim - which deals with the births of boys and girls, specifically the TUM'A and TAHARA status of their mother and the korbanot that a YOLEDET brings at the end of a specified period of time.

The Maftir of HaChodesh - from Sh'mot 12 - presents the early phase of the birth of the nation of Israel - the mitzva to set up a Jewish Calendar and the mitzvot related to the very first Korban Pesach on the night of the Exodus.

Nisan - Chodesh HaAviv - the spring month - which we announce this Shabbat of "births", heralds the rebirth of nature.

Rabbi Weinreb links the readings of the two Torahs this Shabbat, as indicated above. So we have decided to devote this Lead Tidbit to the rebirth of nature - specifically, to TREES.

Last week's Word of the Month box introduced the topic of BIRKAT HA-ILANOT, "the blessing for trees", with a warning that this bracha has been "delayed" this year because of the two Adars, and that we should be diligent to say the bracha as early in the month of Nisan as we can, to avoid missing this once-a-year celebration of HaShem's world.

Let's back up a bit and take a fresh look at TREES from a Jewish perspective. Actually, we'll back up even further and notice what our Sages did in composing b'rachot for food and other things.

Chazal could have decided to make one catch-all bracha for us to say before eating or drinking anything, and when experiencing sights and sounds [cont. p.4](#)

### Jerusalem in/out times for Tazri'a-HaChodesh

6:22pm / 7:36pm Summer time (see page 3 for other zmanim)

Checked and double checked for Shabbat Parshat Tazri'a - HaChodesh (m'vorchim)

**Moshiko**

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**Word of the Month** Shabbat HaChodesh is on Rosh Chodesh Nisan 28% of the time. The rest of the years (like this one) it is Shabbat M'vorchim. Rosh Chodesh Nisan will be on Tuesday...

ראש חודש ניסן יהיה ביום שלישי הבא עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה:

The molad is on SUN (April 3rd) 12h 44m 8p (1:23pm Israel Summer time)

המולד יהיה ביום ראשון, ארבעים וארבע דקות ושמונה חלקים אחרי חצות היום.

In Rambam notation: א' יח:תת • Actual (astronomical) molad: SUN 5:32pm



## SUMMER TIME

Candles (earliest)	Taz-HaCho	Havdala	next week
6:22 (5:40)	Yerushalayim	7:36	6:27 / 7:41
6:40 (5:43)	S'derot	7:38	6:45 / 7:43
6:38 (5:41)	Gush Etzion	7:36	6:43 / 7:41
6:39 (5:42)	Raanana	7:39	6:44 / 7:43
6:39 (5:41)	Beit Shemesh/RBS	7:37	6:43 / 7:42
6:39 (5:42)	Netanya	7:38	6:44 / 7:43
6:39 (5:42)	Rehovot	7:38	6:44 / 7:43
6:37 (5:42)	Be'erSheva/Otniel	7:37	6:42 / 7:42
6:39 (5:41)	Modi'in/Chashmona'im	7:37	6:43 / 7:42
6:22 (5:42)	Petach Tikva	7:38	6:27 / 7:43
6:22 (5:40)	Maale Adumim	7:36	6:27 / 7:41
6:38 (5:41)	Ginot Shomron	7:37	6:43 / 7:42
6:37 (5:40)	Gush Shiloh	7:36	6:42 / 7:41
6:38 (5:41)	K4 & Hevron	7:36	6:43 / 7:41
6:38 (5:41)	Giv'at Ze'ev	7:36	6:43 / 7:41
6:39 (5:42)	Yad Binyamin	7:38	6:44 / 7:43
6:40 (5:43)	Ashkelon	7:39	6:45 / 7:44
6:27 (5:40)	Tzfat	7:36	6:32 / 7:41
6:39 (5:42)	Zichron Yaakov	7:38	6:44 / 7:43

Rabbeinu Tam Havdala - Tazri'a-HaChodesh - 8:12pm

Note: Summer Time begins Friday morning when 2:00am becomes 3:00am. We have added the earliest time for Shabbat candles for the current week. "Next week's" earliest is the second PLAG time below.

Subtract 1hr for March 30.31 Ranges are 10 days. WED-FRI 24 AdarB - 4 Nisan • March 30 - Apr 8	
Earliest Talit & T'filin	5:41-5:29am
Sunrise	6:32-6:20am
Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma (Magen Avraham: 9:01-8:53am)	9:37-9:30am
Sof Z'man T'fila (Magen Avraham: 10:09-10:03am)	10:39-10:34am
Chatzot (halachic noon)	12:44pm-12:41am
Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha)	1:15-1:13pm
Plag Mincha	5:39-5:43¼pm
Sunset (based on sea level: 6:56-7:02pm)	7:01-7:07pm

G-d commanded us to make our calendar, thereby making us partners with Him in the concept of Sanctification of Time. One little thing that we can do to demonstrate our joy in this gift: Know the Hebrew date... and use it.

Years that start on a Tuesday are always K'SEDER, i.e. Marcheshvan has 29 days and Kislev has 30. Years that start on Monday or Shabbat are either CHASEIR (29-29) or SHALEIM (30-30). Years that start on Thursday can be any of the three situations. More "Know the Calendar", in honor of Parshat HaChodesh

There are 14 different year-types (configurations that include what day of the week RH begins, how many days do Marcheshvan and Kislev have, and how many Adars)

The most common is 12-month year beginning on Thursday and the months in order (18%)

The rarest is 12-month year beginning on Thursday, with a 30-day Marcheshvan (3.3%)

This year, 5771 - THU start, full Marcheshvan & Kislev, is the most common 13-month year-type (6.7%)

Her children and I, Avidan

Hints at Norelco's three heads

**350 double Adars**

From V-12 to Ba-7 (T117-119)

Sarcophilus harrisii suri

## LEAD TIDBIT cont. from front page

Of significance. Think about it. SHEHAKOL would work for bread, wine, cake, apples, carrots, chicken, smelling fragrant spices, seeing a rainbow, hearing thunder... That single bracha would work for just about all things. They could have done it that way. Their call.

But they decided otherwise. Each food item could have had its own specific bracha. Mitzvot do. Matza, Maror, Omer, Sukka, Shofar, Lulav, Megila, Shabbat candles, Mezuzah, Challa... each have their own bracha. Apples and oranges don't. Tomatoes and peas don't. They could have.

But Chazal went in the direction of categories. Each bracha tells us that our Sages wanted us to appreciate the specialness of different categories. Foods that grow from the ground were given special brachot, rather than the generic SHEHAKOL.

And that which grows on trees was singled out for extra-special attention with BOREI PRI HA-EITZ, rather than staying with HAADAMA, which would be true enough for fruit that comes from trees which grow in the ground.

Chazal saw something special about trees. And they wanted us to be mindful and appreciative of that specialness.

We have BOREI PRI HA-EITZ when we eat the fruit of the tree, and BOREI ATZEI V'SAMIM when we smell the

fragrances of trees (or tree-like plants and flowers). We have SHEKACHA LO BA-OLAMO when we merely SEE a beautiful forest.

And they went one further step. They ask us to take a look at fruit trees in the spring (specifically in Nisan), before they begin to bear fruit, when they have flowered - and they exclaim: Look at G-d's world. Here are trees that will give you delicious, nutritious fruits in a while, but in the meantime, take a look. Take a smell. Beautiful, no? That's G-d's world. He has created all kinds of beautiful things in this world - He didn't miss a trick. And for whom did He create it all? For the benefit of human beings.

The Sages were making a broad point about G-d's world, but they chose flowering fruit trees in Nisan as the epitome of the concept.

Think some of these thoughts the next time you hold an apple in your hand. Think some of these thoughts the next time you walk past a tree or see a bird perched on a branch.

And seek out fruit trees in bloom as soon as Nisan arrives, so you can say the bracha (which you will find in the middle color pages of this issue of TT) with joy and appreciation for the beauties of this world that G-d created and in which He placed us. (The bracha is preferably said on at least two fruit trees, with flowers but not yet with fruit.) Tizku L'Mitzvot and enjoy!

# ברכת האילנות BIRKAT HAILANOT

פרוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם  
 שלא חסר בעולמו דבר,  
 וברא בו בריות טובות  
 ואילנות טובים להנות בהם בני אדם:

Some versions of the B'RACHA have פלום instead of דבר

Some add these T'hilim (122 and 128)

שיר המעלות לדוד, שמחתי באמרים לי, בית ה' נלך. עמדות היו רגלינו, בשעריך ירושלים. ירושלים הבנויה, כעיר שחברה לה יחדו. ששם עלו שבטים שבטי יה עדות לישראל, להדות לשם ה'. כי שמה ישובו כסאות למשפט, כסאות לבית דוד. שאלו שלום ירושלים, ישליו אהבה. יהי שלום בחילך, שלוחה בארמנותיך. למען אחי ורעי, אדברה נא שלום בך. למען בית ה' אלהינו, אבקשה טוב לך.

**TREES** by Joyce Kilmer  
 I think that I shall never see  
 A poem as lovely as a tree.  
 A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
 Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;  
 A tree that looks to God all day,  
 And lifts her leafy arms to pray;  
 A tree that may in summer wear  
 A nest of robins in her hair;  
 Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
 Who intimately lives with rain.  
 Poems are made by fools like me,  
 But only God can make a tree.

שיר המעלות, אשרי כל ירא ה', ההלך בדרךיו. יגיע כפיך כי תאכל, אשריך וטוב לך. אשתך כגפן פריה בירכתי ביתך, בניך כשתלי זיתים, סביב לשלחנך. הנה כי כן יברך גבר, ירא ה'. יברכה ה' מציון, וראה בטוב ירושלים, כל ימי חייך. וראה בנים לבניך, שלום על ישראל.

אמשול לך משל, למה הדבר דומה – לאדם שהיה הולך במדבר וזיהו רעב ועיף וצמא, ומצא אילן שפירותיו מתוקין וצלו נאה, ואמת המים עוברת תחתיו. אכל מפירותיו, ושתה ממימיו, וישב בצילו. וכשביקש לילך, אמר: אילן אילן, כמה אברכך? אם אומר לך שיהו פירותיך מתוקין – הרי פירותיך מתוקין, שיהא צילך נאה – הרי צילך נאה, שתהא אמת המים עוברת תחתך – הרי אמת המים עוברת תחתך. אלא: יהי רצון שכל נטיעות שנטעין ממך יהיו כמותך. אף אתה, כמה אברכך? אם בתורה – הרי תורה, אם בעושר – הרי עושר, אם בכנים – הרי כנים. אלא: יהי רצון שיהיו צאצאי מערך כמותך. תענית ה'

## Tazri'a HaChodesh

27th of 54 sedras; 4th of 10 in Vayikra  
 Tazri'a finishes the first half of the sedras

Written on 128 lines in a Sefer Torah (rank: 48)

9 Parshiyot; 5 open and 4 closed

67 p'sukim - 48th in the Torah; 8th in Vayikra

1010 words - 48th in the Torah; 8th in Vayikra

3667 letters - 48th in the Torah; 8th in Vayikra

Tazria is small. Only 6 other sedras are shorter (2 others in Vayikra and the last 4 of D'varim)

## MITZVOT

7 mitzvot of the 613; 5 positive; 2 prohibitions

Tazri'a is HaChodesh 20.5% of the time

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-counts of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI (positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition) - Rambam counts positives (248) and prohibitions (365) separately. X:Y is the perek and pasuk from which the mitzva is counted.

## Kohen - First Aliya 13 p'sukim - 12:1-13:5

[P> 12:1 (8)] Perek 12, the shortest in the Torah with 8 p'sukim, deals with "birth". A woman becomes "ritually unclean" following a (normal) birth - one week for a boy - and on the 8th day the boy is circumcised - and two weeks for a girl. This period of TUM'A is followed by a special "waiting time" of 33 or 66 days for boy or girl respectively, after which the mother is to bring the korbanot of a YOLEDET. The whole issue of the "ritual impurity of a woman having given birth" constitutes a mitzva [166,A100 12:2], as does the bringing of the sacrifices [168,A76 12:6]. This portion of the Torah is also the source of the general prohibition of eating "sacred meat" while in a state of "ritual impurity" [167,L129 12:4].

## Mitzva Watch

The mitzva of Brit Mila is found back in Parshat Lech L'cha and in this week's sedra of Tazri'a. Most mitzva counters point to Lech L'cha as the source of the mitzva, and not the more "logical" source in Tazri'a - logical because we find the language of a command: "Speak to the children of Israel saying..." In Lech L'cha, the mitzva is in the context of the story of G-d's commanding Avraham to circumcise himself and the males of his

household. True, the p'sukim there contain the language of a command that is defined as the mitzva in perpetuity, but the story is of a 99 year old man, his 13 year old son, Yishmael, and various non-Jewish slaves being circumcised. Why count it from Lech L'cha rather than Tazri'a?

The answer is fairly obvious, but let's say it anyway. BRIT MILA is a two-part mitzva whose two-word name tells us so. MILA is the physical removal of the foreskin and whatever else is done by the MOHEL on the 8th day - or whenever thereafter. The Mohel says the b'racha AL HAMILA and then in a matter of seconds, that aspect of the mitzva is accomplished. The BRIT part of the mitzva takes much longer. As soon as the AMENs fade from the Mohel's bracha, the father of the boy makes a second bracha of mitzva - to enter him (the baby) into the covenant of (BRITO SHEL) Avraham Avinu. This is the multifaceted, long-term mitzva that the parents continuously and variously fulfill as they raise their son to Torah, Chupa, and Maasim Tovim. The MILA part of circumcision comes from Tazri'a. The commitment part, the BRIT part, is from Lech L'cha. That's why our Sages pointed to Lech L'cha as the (primary) source of the mitzva.

More. Because we have already been commanded on MILA back in Lech L'cha, the Gemara teaches us some "new" aspects of the mitzva from the "repetition" of the mitzva here. E.g. that an 8th day Mila can be performed

on Shabbat. (And that this applies only to a birth through the birth-canal, as opposed to a C-section delivery whose Mila is not done on Shabbat.) That Mila cannot be done at night. And other details.

**Ponder this...** To over simplify: one aspect of the rules of ritual purity and impurity for a Yoledet (a woman who have given birth) is to show the sharp contrast between life and death. This can be seen in the Tum'a of a dead body, in the laws of Nida, the rules of pregnancy, as well as the Yoledet. A woman's period signifies that life has not begun within her - there is TUM'A. A pregnant woman has life developing within her - TA'HARA. When that life emerges into the world, she is no longer carrying that extra life - TUM'A.

Another aspect of the procedures for the new mother is geared to help her recoup her physical, psychological and emotional identity and well-being.

[P> 13:1 (8)] After the parsha of BIRTH, the Torah moves on to the topic of NEGA'IM (various skin afflictions). The rest of Tazria (and most of Metzora) deals with these topics.

A person with an affliction that MIGHT be Tzora'at (in one of its many forms) is to be examined by a kohen (expert in the laws and identification of N'GA'IM, with a degree, perhaps, in dermatology, as well). Under certain circumstances, the kohen might declare the individual he is checking, a

M'TZORA rendering him immediately ritually unclean. Or, a kohen might order a weeklong quarantine with an additional examination to determine the status of the individual, to take place on the seventh day of said quarantine.

## Levi - Second Aliya 12 p'sukim - 13:6-17

That second inspection can result in the person being declared "clean", or "Tamei", or an additional week of quarantine can be ordered.

[P> 13:9 (9)] A kohen must examine a case of suspected Tzora'at. He looks for changes in coloration of skin and hair, raised or sunken appearance of the blemished area, increase, decrease or no change in size, and other signs. Sometimes he declares immediate Tzora'at. Sometimes "ritual purity" is declared immediately, in which case a trip to the pharmacy for a salve might be the best thing. And sometimes a quarantine period is declared.

The expertise of a kohen in the area of Nega'im is both an art and a science. And more. Dozens of shades of white and other colors must be distinguishable to the inspecting kohen. An error in perception of a white like the shell of an egg as opposed to the color of the thin membrane under the shell (for example) can make the

difference between declaring the examinee Tahor or Tamei. Only certain times of the day are permitted for examining a NEGA, because of the different effects of light and shadow.

The laws of Nega'im are unbelievably difficult and complex. And, in addition to everything else, the kohen has to know the psychology of the cases and be sensitive to the personal situations of the afflicted. One example is that a new bride or groom is not examined by the kohen, so they cannot be declared TAMEI. That could spoil their moods. Which puts an obvious subjective twist to the topic of N'GA'IM.

A look at some of the Mishnayot in TAHAROT, even without going in depth, can give one an appreciation of what is involved in this topic. Once again, learning comes to the rescue and allows us to get "involved" in mitzvot even when they aren't active.

## Shlishi - Third Aliya 6 p'sukim - 13:18-23

[P> 13:18 (6)] The Torah presents further details on what the kohen looks for when inspecting boils and similar afflictions on the skin. The elaborate checking and time delays from inspection to inspection serve to give the afflicted person ample time for introspection. A NEGA on the outside mirrors a

character blemish or a religious shortcoming on the inside. While the kohen examines the external, the Metzora does a thorough job of seeing his own inner being.

## MitzvaWatch

Why all the detail? Why are there so many different types of N'GA'IM? Perhaps it is because WE are all different. So many different types of people. So many different temperaments. So many different sins. And so many different personal reactions to our individual situations. We need to feel this individuality. It helps us be responsible for our own deeds. One imagines that the kohen-examiner played the role of counselor too. Maybe sensing a disturbed soul that needs TIPUL along with the NEGA.

Keep in mind that the whole topic of TZORA'AT and N'GA'IM tells us that the body and soul are intimately connected. Of course, we should know that already, but these mitzvot and details bring the point home. As an analogy - something to think about - modern psychology recognizes a connection between the physical and the mental. Physical and emotional. The word that sums up this idea is "psychosomatic" - Of, or relating to a disorder having physical symptoms but originating from mental or emotional causes; Relating to or concerned with the influence of the mind on the body, and the body on the mind... Now just substitute the word spiritual for mental and you get a good picture of

what N'GA'IM is about.

## R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya

### 5 p'sukim - 13:24-28

[S> 13:24 (5)] This portion discusses burns on the skin and different colorations within the affected area. Keep in mind that a blemish of any sort is NOT Tzora'at unless declared so by a kohen. It could look like Tzora'at, but it isn't unless declared "Tamei" by a kohen. In fact, two people can have identical signs and one can be declared a Metzora, the other not so. And the treatment of each case is completely different as a result.

## Chamishi 5th Aliya

### 11 p'sukim - 13:29-39

[P> 13:29 (9)] This next portion deals with yet another type or two of N'GA'IM - sores on the head, neck, or face, and blotches on the skin. As was mentioned before, we are dealing here with a complex issue of a bridge between the physical and the spiritual. Or, to put it differently, of physical manifestations of spiritual problems.

To help understand this idea better, let's carry the above analogy a little further: There are physical afflictions and psychological problems that people can suffer. Sometimes, each type is treated independently. But sometimes, a trained professional in

the field will see the physical problems as manifestations of the psychological problems. And sometimes, vice versa. In those cases, it is very important for the professional to decide what gets treated and what will improve when the other does, even without special attention. In N'GA'IM, the kohein is the expert who decides. And not every kohein is qualified, by the way. N'GA'IM is like a second degree for a kohein.

This was only an analogy, but this is one of the lessons, of Torat HaM'tzora, the laws of N'GA'IM.

The laws regarding the state of ritual impurity resulting from Tzora'at constitute a positive commandment [169,A101 13:29]. In other words, we would be doing the wrong thing to ignore these laws and details. Additionally, there is a specific prohibition of cutting the hair of a Tzora'at area on the body [170,L307 13:33]. Among other reasons, this would remove an important indicator for the inspecting kohen (and more importantly, perhaps, for the afflicted individual.)

Let's run with the analogy. If a doctor feels that a rash on a patient who came to him might be the result of stress and tension in the workplace, then it would serve no purpose to merely treat the rash. In fact, the rash might clear up after some stress-reduction measures without any treatment of the specific rash. In the case of N'GA'IM, it would be prohibited to

treat the NEGA with physical means. Welts, burns, blemishes, boils, etc. might go away after T'shuva and the Tzara'at procedures. How can a korbhan heal an affliction? How can T'shuva heal it? Same question as, How can psychological counseling cure asthma. But it can (sometimes) and so can all of the "remedies" in this week's sedra. Mind, body, soul - they are all connected and interrelated.

[S> 13:38 (2)] In this small parsha, the Torah gives an example of a rash of white spots erupting on the body. In this case, a rash is a rash. TAHOR.

## Shishi - Sixth Aliya

### 15 p'sukim - 13:40-54

[S> 13:40 (7)] Certain cases of baldness are discussed in the first part of this portion. Usually, baldness is just baldness. But occasionally, the skin that is exposed when the hair falls out is blemished in specific ways which might mean Tzora'at. A person who has Tzora'at, tears his clothes, lets his hair hang loose, and must announce in public that he is TAMEI. The proper conduct of the Metzora is a mitzva [171,A112 13:45].

[S> 13:47 (13)] The rest of this Aliya deals with infection of Tzora'at on garments. Wool, linen, and leather are the materials that are subject to Tzora'at HaBeged. The laws of infected garments also constitute one of

the 613 mitzvot [172, A102 13:47].

## Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya 5 p'sukim - 13:55-59

The topic of "afflictions of garments" continues into this Aliya, for the duration of Tazri'a. The fact that there is such a thing as an affliction of a garment tells us something. We are dealing with different ways that G-d communicates his "displeasure" with us, as individuals. Today, we might say, His communication is more subtle - but we must see it... and react appropriately.

## Maftir - 2nd Torah 20 p'sukim; Sh'mot 12:1-20

This Maftir adds to the Sedra Stats: 1 parsha (S), 20 p'sukim, 313 words, 1208 letters, 9 mitzvot - you do the totals for this week (if you want)

This is the fourth of the Four Parshiyot. Parshat HaChodesh is the Shabbat of or the Shabbat right before Rosh Chodesh Nissan. We read of the mitzva to establish the Jewish Calendar (the first two p'sukim), followed by the commands concerning Pesach - Korban Pesach, Matza, Chametz, etc. (the rest of the 20-pasuk maftir).

The main theme of the Maftir is Korban Pesach. KP is different from all other korbanot. All

korbanot were brought in the Beit HaMikdash between the two daily T'midim, except for KP which was brought after the afternoon Tamid. KP can be brought and eaten in a state of ritual impurity (in certain circumstances). This can be seen as a "compromise" by G-d to facilitate our performance of this mitzva. (An individual is postponed until Pesach Sheni because of TUM'A, but the community brings and eats KP while TAMEI, rather than wait the month.)

The Maftir contains several mitzvot -- the Jewish Calendar [4], to slaughter the KP [5], to eat it [6], not to eat it rare or cooked [7], not to leave over any of KP to the morning [8], to destroy Chametz from one's possession [9], to eat matza on Seder night [10], not to possess Chametz on Pesach [11], not to eat any foods that contain Chametz [12]. We also find the source of SHMURA MATZA and the source of the permitted M'LACHOT on Yom Tov. Other mitzvot related to KP and chametz are found elsewhere in Parshat Bo and elsewhere in the Torah.

## Haftara 28 p'sukim Yechezkeil 45:16-46:18

S'faradim start 2 p'sukim later and end 3 p'sukim before the end (for Ashkenazim)

The Haftara contains the prophecy of the building of the Beit HaMikdash and the restoration of Korban Pesach - hence the

connection to the Maftir. Both the Torah and Haftara announce the holiday of Pesach, in very similar words, and both speak of putting blood on the doorpost. Not only do both readings talk about Pesach, but both focus on Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

*Perek 13 in Vayikra has 13 of them.  
And there is one more in Perek 14.  
And that total of 14 is it  
for the whole Tanach*

So different from its anagram!

**FLASHBACK**

☞ We must guard against the unconscious tendency to assume something we have done to be wrong because we had not planned to do it. G-d often protects us from our plans.

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## Diarei Menachem

As is well known that the leprosy-looking disease referred to in this week's parsha is not the leprosy that we all know of in relatively modern times. Indeed, our rabbis taught us that the Hebrew word for the ailment METZORA is an abbreviated form of the term MOTZI SHEM RA or "the one who gives [someone] a bad name". This implies, of course, that the suffering individual is being punished for his anti-social behavior.

That the METZORA, the one sick with the disease, can only be diagnosed as having the ailment if the Kohen declares him so is proof positive that the ailment is of a spiritual nature. In the end of the day it doesn't matter how many symptoms the person displays, how obviously the individual is suffering, or how many sages recognize the disease, only the kohen's declaration can affirm the malady.

Since TZARA'AT is a spiritual malaise, when the victim is isolated in tandem with the Torah's instructions, it is not an issue of preventing contagion. Rather the individual is isolated from the society that he offended and must now contemplate quietly on the error of his ways.

The Talmud (Arachin 16a) teaches us that this spiritual malady was a punishment for a much wider range of offenses to society than is generally believed. These include bloodshed, false oaths, sexual immorality, and selfishness. The mind boggles to think of how many of us would suffer the same were the kohanim functioning today.

# VEBBE REBBE

**QUESTION:** *What is the preferred manner of disposing of the piece of challa that one takes from her dough: burning it or wrapping it up and throwing it in the garbage?*

**ANSWER:** Challah is supposed to be given to a kohen, in theory to eat, which is one of many ways it is related to the laws of teruma (see Rambam, Bikurim 5:13-14). If teruma becomes tamei (impure), it may not be eaten. The gemara (Shabbat 25a) derives that just as tamei kodahsim (sacrifices) are to be burnt, so too tamei teruma is burnt, and this is true of tamei challah as well (see mishna, Challah 4:8). All challah is tamei in our days because we all are tamei. Although food does not become tamei before it is touched by one of seven liquids, challah, which is taken from dough, is always touched by water. Therefore, the Rama (Yoreh Deah 322:5) gives standard instructions to take off a kazayit for challah and burn it.

Where would one burn the challah? Challah is forbidden for a non-kohen and, therefore, one would not think to burn it in her regular oven. The Rama (ibid.) says that one should make a separate fire, but for an unexpected reason: a non-kohen must not receive benefit from the heat it gives off. He continues that the minhag is to burn it in the oven before baking the bread. Ovens used to have a separate

chamber with fuel and fire, and one could throw the challah in among the fuel. Nowadays, gas or electric ovens have one chamber where things bake and do not usually burn (unless one puts the temperature very high and/or leaves it for a long time).

Still most poskim seem to prefer burning the challah even in the oven. Why doesn't baking this "treif" food create a kashrut problem? Indeed, whatever surface touches the hot but not yet burnt challah will need to be koshered and therefore one should have a treif tray to put it on. However, the challah vapors are not a problem. The Shulchan Aruch and Rama (YD 108:1) rule that reicha (odor) from non-kosher meat does not forbid kosher meat roasted in the same large oven, b'dieved. The following situations improve matters further: the foods are not fatty, the two are not in the oven at the same time, one of them is covered with dough (helpful regarding milchig and fleishig as opposed to treif). May we set up this situation in the first place? The Shach (citing the Issur v'Heter) says that it is permitted to bake rabbinically forbidden food together with kosher food. (Challah is a rabbinic law outside Israel, and even in Israel in our times - Shulchan Aruch, YD 322:2). Because not all agree, many suggest wrapping the challah in foil. Realize that it takes longer for it to burn that way and that the dough rises and may burst through its encasing before it burns. Many are concerned that the chance of mistake is great, as is the inconvenience.

(Burning on the stovetop has some advantages, but the smell of burnt bread, and the (remote?) possibility of a fire are issues.)

Therefore, some say that one may dispose of the challah in the garbage, after wrapping it (some say double wrap, which seems to be a chumra) to avoid disgracing it. The major justification is based by on Rashi (Shabbat 25a; see Tosafot ad loc.) that it is not a mitzva to burn the challah per se, but there is a matter of removing the danger that someone will eat it. Therefore, throwing it out may be preferable to waiting for a chance to burn it (Minchat Yitzchak IV, 13, based on the Chazon Ish, Maasrot 7:13). We cannot do justice to the halachic analysis, but let us say that despite the fact that Rashi's opinion is the minority and is difficult, this option has become increasingly common (including in kosher bakeries) and accepted by many rabbanim (some suggesting mitigating factors that are beyond our scope). Thus, if one finds it difficult to settle on a feasible and safe (physically and kashrut-wise) system of burning the challah, she should not feel guilty if she adopts the system of wrapping the challah and discarding it in the garbage.

Rav Daniel Mann, Eretz Hemdah Institute

## PARSHAT PARA, PARSHAT HACHODESH, SHABBAT HAGADOL [2]

by **Dr. Meir Tamari**

Nations need calendars to record, memorize and witness the multitude of actions involved in their activities; taxes, transfer of property rights, records of marriages, births and deaths of rulers and ruled alike, as well as memorials of historical, religious, and political events. It is fitting therefore that the very first mitzva given to us was that pertaining to our calendar, a mitzva recalled in reading Parshat HaChodesh before (or on) Rosh Chodesh Nisan. "With this mitzva Israel was told, 'from now on the months will be yours to do with as you please. Before, you were for laboring for others, now the months are yours in order to pursue your freely chosen existence' (S'forno). Only free men and women can worship G-d (Rabbi S. R. Hirsch).

In this vein we can understand the Midrash that tells us that the forced labor in Egypt ceased on Rosh Chodesh Nisan. In this month of our national freedom from slavery, human courts were given mastery over Time to determine the Jewish Calendar. Since we follow a lunar calendar whereas the seasons are determined in relation to the sun, Pesach would rotate among the seasons. However, the Sanhedrin's power to add a month [7 times in a 19-year cycle], ensures that Pesach always coincides with spring.

In addition, there are adjustments to the length of certain months to take into account considerations of Chagim and Shabbat. Our names of the months are Babylonian in origin, whereas the Tanach numbers them always in sequence from Nisan. So, Nisan, month of redemption, is the first month of our year, thereby we remember the Exodus throughout the year; in the same way by numbering the days of the week from Shabbat, its memory remains with us throughout the week.

All this is not merely a technical matter, but rather one of great spiritual importance, reflecting the whole subject of redemption. "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear, the time of singing is come" (Shir HaShirim 2:11-12). "In the spring nature awakes from the dormancy of winter, so Israel blossomed forth from slavery in a burst of freedom. In the future too, it will awaken from the long galut to realize its true purpose (Rabbi A. I. Kook). "In Nisan they were redeemed from Egypt and in Nisan will also be their future and complete redemption".

The moon waxes, wanes and waxes renewed every month, in the same way Israel, no matter to what level of physical slavery and to what spiritual poverty it may be brought, nevertheless it arises anew and never can be destroyed. "God took this race by the hand and showed them the gleam of the new-born moon. This renewal of light is not only up there in the sky, but calls each person in Israel to their own fresh illumination, to their own human

spring. So He spoke and made the most oppressed and grief-laden race into the joyous heralds of hope to mankind, the announcers of deliverance from darkness into light, from slavery to freedom and from death to life" (Collected writings of Rabbi S. R. Hirsch, pp. 2).

"Rabbi Yishmael taught, that the world was created in Nisan and Rabbi Eliezer taught that G-d actually created the world in Justice [Tishrei], but had tempered it with Mercy in Nisan". So in Tishrei there is Judgment, Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, while in Nisan there is Mercy as the whole redemption on Pesach was through Mercy' (Shem MiShmuel). There are two cycles in the Jewish year, the one following Nisan starts the cycle of the Festivals and the other in Tishrei starting that of the seasons. The second cycle is a cosmic one that starts with the Creation, carries through to Judgment and to Atonement; Shabbat, Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. This is the cycle which is common to all mankind since they all share the world that He created, all are judged by Him and all can repent before Him. However, the first cycle that starts with Nisan reflects a purely Jewish experience. Slavery in Egypt, redemption on Pesach, Matan Torah on Shavuot and divine protection in the desert when we dwelt in Sukkot, were only experienced by Israel. "In the kiddush of the Shalosh Regalim we recite 'in joy and gladness', whereas on Shabbat and Yamim Nora'im we say, 'in love'. This is because they are fixed in time

by God's actions whereas we determine the dates of the Regalim, for which we have greater affinity since they reflect our experiences" (Shem MiShmuel).

## Rabbi Weinreb's Weekly Column: **Tazri'a - HaChodesh** **My Earliest Memory**

Have you ever been asked the question, "What is your earliest memory?"?

I have been asked that question many times. There was a time, long ago, when I was a graduate student in psychology, when that question was posed. The answer was considered very revealing of the respondent's deeper psyche.

Such exceptionally early memories were known in psychoanalytic circles as "screen memories" and were considered quite significant diagnostically. The scientific significance of such memories is now considered to have no basis, but they are certainly interesting and make for great conversation.

Considering the question posed, I had a clear image of my first memory. I was standing outside a brick building, looking up at my father, may he rest in peace, surrounded by a small crowd of other men. Everyone was looking at the moon.

This may have been my first experience, at age three or four, of

Kiddush L'vana, the monthly ceremony during which the congregation exits the shul and acknowledges the first appearance of the new moon.

I have another memory of the religious significance of this ceremony. I remember being told that the Hebrew word for "month" is "chodesh" and the Hebrew word for "new" is "chadash". It was then that I learned of the significance of the new moon which commences a new month, and became aware for the first time that the Jewish people follow the lunar, not solar, calendar.

This week, we read the Torah portion of Tazri'a. But since it is also the very last Sabbath before the new moon of the month of Nisan, the month of Pesach and spring time and the beginning of the new calendar year, we will also read an additional portion from Sh'mot 12:1-20, known as Parshat HaChodesh. Famously, according to Rashi, these verses are the true beginning of the Torah.

The theme of newness and the constant potentiality for renewal is the central theme this Shabbat. It is also the central theme in the Jewish calendar, and, one might say, in Jewish tradition in general. The symbolism of the moon constantly renewing itself is coupled this week with the symbolism of springtime and nature's renewal.

This Shabbat, we herald the approaching holiday of Pesach, but not as a holiday of freedom and redemption. Not just yet. This week,

we recognize that Pesach is Chag HaAviv, the festival of springtime. Pesach has a myriad of symbolic meanings, one of which is the perennial opportunity for personal and national rejuvenation.

When I focus on my earliest memory with extra effort, I remember what the men who surrounded me under that moon so long ago were saying to each other. Each man addressed three others with the traditional Jewish greeting, "Shalom aleichem". I remember being puzzled by why Daddy was greeting friends that he saw daily with this special welcome, generally reserved for those whom one hadn't seen in a while.

I didn't ask him about it then; after all, it was still the era when "children were to be seen and not heard". But I have since answered the question for myself, and have explained it to my children and to my students as follows:

"The new moon is a symbol for renewal. It is a time for each of us personally to begin again, to forget past mistakes, to 'turn over a new leaf'. It is also a time for us to renew and recharge our relationship with others. It is a time to begin a new slate, to forgive each other, and to appreciate each other anew. Hence, we greet at least three friends, even old friends, with 'Shalom aleichem,' as if they were newcomers in our lives."

And so, the supplemental reading this week teaches us about newness, and about - to borrow

Lincoln's famous phrase - "...a new nation, conceived in liberty..." Is there any connection between the supplemental Parshat HaChodesh and this week's main Torah portion, Tazri'a?

I would say so, for this week's Torah portion begins, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a woman conceives and bears a male child, she shall be unclean seven days... and on the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.'" (Vayikra 12:1-3) The opening theme this week is also one of a new beginning, of a birth of a new baby. It is a time for the celebration of the entry of a new member into the Jewish people.

Hence, there is surely a connection between Tazri'a and HaChodesh. They both adumbrate the centrality of the new in our tradition.

It is at this point that you, dear reader, might well ask, "If we are celebrating not just newness in general, but the arrival of a new human being into this world and of a new member of the Jewish faith, then why does the mother enter the realm of tum'ah, ritual uncleanness? Should she not, rather, enter the realm of k'dusha v'tahara, sanctity and cleanness?"

I found a most thought-provoking answer to this oft-asked question recorded in the name of that most profound of the Chassidic masters, Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk. He cites the passage in the Talmud which states that the "keys of childbirth" are kept

by the Almighty Himself. It is He who presides, as it were, over "labor and delivery". Once the baby is born, His Presence departs as well. Just as when the soul of man departs, tum'ah descends, so too when the Divine Spirit departs, tum'ah ensues.

The Kotzker once again teaches a very deep, albeit existentially pessimistic, lesson. Perhaps one must be Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk to truly understand why he forces us to face darkness even at the moment of joyous celebration of birth.

For most of us, on the other hand, this week's lesson is of light, and not of darkness. It is an occasion to contemplate all that is new in our natural and interpersonal environments, especially at this time of year. It is an opportunity to seize the moment by taking advantage of the constantly available potential for renewal of ourselves and of our friendships and relationships.

Is this just a Jewish message? Of course not. It is a message for all of humanity. And it is so well expressed by the famous adventurer and explorer of the sea, Jacques-Yves Cousteau, in his book *The Silent World*, when he writes:

"Sometimes we are lucky enough to know that our lives have been changed, to discard the old, embrace the new, and run headlong down an immutable course. It happened to me at Le Mourillon on that summer's day, when my eyes were opened to the sea."

This Shabbat, our eyes open to a

different kind of sea. May we embrace the new and run, headlong and happy, down a different and better course.

## *Praying with Passion*

Giving more meaning to our T'fillah  
One Week at a Time

*Excerpted and reprinted with permission of the author*

## **P'sukei d'Zimra: Y'HI CH'VOD The Chosen People**

כִּי בָחַר ה' בְּצִיּוֹן, אֲוֶה לְמוֹשָׁב לוֹ. כִּי יַעֲקֹב בָּחַר לוֹ יְהוָה, יִשְׂרָאֵל לְסִגְלָתוֹ.  
כִּי לֹא יִטַּשׁ ה' עַמּוֹ, וְיִנְחָלְתוּ לֹא יַעֲזֹב.

**Meaning:** translation...

...For G-d selected Zion, He desired it for His dwelling place. **For G-d selected Jacob as His own, Israel as His treasure.** For Hashem will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His heritage...

**Theme:**

An essential concept of the prayer

### **The Jewish People's Special Relationship**

G-d selected Jacob as His own, Israel as His treasure.

**Insight:** Deeper meanings...

### **Choosing G-d**

Many people are somewhat uncomfortable with this idea that "G-d

selected Jacob as His own, Israel as His treasure.” They perceive the concept of a “Chosen People” (Am Nivchar) to contradict the accepted Western ideal of all people being equal before G-d. To be able to counter this objection, one must understand that we were crowned with that title when we received the Torah at Mount Sinai.

When the Torah refers to the Jewish people as “chosen,” it is not in any way asserting that Jews are racially superior. In fact, any person, regardless of national or racial background, can choose to accept the Torah and become part of the Jewish nation. Some of the greatest names in Jewish history - Ruth, the ancestor of King David, and Onkelos the Talmudic Sage -- were converts to Judaism.

Yet our uniqueness as the “Chosen People”, actually began to take shape long before we received the Torah, in the times of Avraham Avinu. Avraham lived in a world steeped in idolatry, which he concluded was contradicted by the reality of design in nature. Avraham came to believe in G-d, and took upon himself the mission of teaching others this monotheistic ideal. After years of enormous effort, dedication and a willingness to accept the responsibility of being G-d's representative in this world, G-d chose Avraham and his descendants to be the teachers of this monotheistic message.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky explains that it is not so much that G-d chose the

Jews; it is more accurate that the Jews (through Avraham) chose G-d. Only Avraham chose to assume the mantle. If others would have shared in his mission (and they were offered the choice), they too would have joined in this special covenant which was sealed upon the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. This is the meaning of Rav Saadya Gaon's famous statement that “our nation is a nation only by virtue of the Torah.”

### **Visualize:**

Images that bring the prayer to life

### **The Club**

There's a group of students at a girls' high school that seem clearly to be the principal's favorites. They are chosen to run all the school's activities. Their opinions are sought when decisions must be made. They meet with the principal several times a day, and her door is always open to them.

The other students in the school are jealous of this group, claiming that they behave in an elitist manner. However, the only distinguishing feature of this favored group is their devotion to the school and their willingness to do whatever the principal asks in order to benefit the school and its students. In fact, anyone willing to do what those students do is automatically admitted into their group.

One can quickly perceive how the other students in the school would resent this special group of girls. They would appear to be elitist, enjoying special privileges and respect that the

rest of the student body cannot obtain. In the same way, the world may view the Jewish people as an elite club, resting on its definition as the “Chosen People” to assert its primacy among other peoples of the world. And yet, like the students in the above story, the Jewish people attain their status from one source alone - their complete devotion. We are chosen, not for privilege, but to serve Hashem. All those who join in this mission are “chosen” as well.

### **Try this:**

Whom do you treasure? Single out one person - spouse, child, dear friend, parent - and imagine re-uniting with this person after a long, long separation. Imagine how you would look at this person -- the profound delight and love in your eyes. Now imagine that Hashem is looking at you - a part of Klal Yisrael - in the same way. Think of this image when you say the words, YISRA'EL LIS-GULATO.

## **Will the Final Redemption Parallel the Exodus?**

Guest article by

**Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher**  
Dean of Students, Diaspora Yeshiva

The prophet Micha said (7:15), "As in the days of your leaving Egypt, I shall show them marvelous things." His words imply that the Exodus is the precedent for the Final Redemption, as the Midrash expounds:

"Just as in Egypt, I shall redeem you in

the future from subjugation to Edom and shall perform miracles for you, as it says, 'As in the days of your leaving Egypt, I shall display miracles' (Tanchuma, Toldot 17)."

Indeed, gradual, phased redemption is found already in Egypt, as in the four redemption expressions with which G-d addresses Moshe:

"Therefore tell the Israelites that I am G-d. I will remove you (1) from the suffering of Egypt, and I will save you (2) from your enslavement. I will redeem you (3) with an outstretched arm and with great punishments, and I will take you (4) to Me as a people. I will be for you G-d" (Sh'mot 6:6-7).

This refers to four stages of redemption. The first stage constituted a lightening of their hardship, although they continued to be Par'o's slaves. (According to the Netziv, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, this occurred during the plague of the wild animals, AROV). The second stage constituted the total cessation of their enslavement (with the plague of hail, during which Par'o began to admire Israel - Netziv). Even so, Israel were not yet free, but under the control of the Egyptian regime. With the plague of the fireborn came the third stage, in which Israel were redeemed totally, with an outstretched arm and with great punishments, and they left slavery for freedom. Yet they were still mired in the forty-nine levels of impurity like idol worshipers. Finally came the fourth stage, in which they were taken to be Hashem's people, and

Hashem became their G-d.

Even though Israel, when redemption arrived, were not worthy of it, G-d still redeemed them, as is stated in the Midrash (Sh'mot Rabba 15):

"G-d said, 'If I consider Israel's deeds, they will never be redeemed. Whom shall I then consider? Their holy ancestors. Through their ancestors' merit I will redeem them.'"

It is not just Israel's condition in the past which delays redemption, but their anticipated condition in the future, as well. Therefore, before introducing the four redemption expressions, G-d says, "Therefore, tell the Israelites that I am G-d", regarding which our sages commented:

"I know that they will ultimately rebel against Me and anger Me. Even so, I shall redeem them for the sake of My name" (Midrash HaGadol).

Complete redemption comes when Israel recognize Hashem as their G-d, as occurred during "Stage Four", at the Sinai Revelation. Yet the Torah goes on and brings a fifth redemption expression: "I will bring you to the land regarding which I swore that I would give it to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. I will give it to you as an inheritance. I am G-d" (Sh'mot 6:8). From the redemption from Egypt we learn that complete redemption consists of when Israel is free ["I will redeem you..."], and living in Eretz Yisrael ["I will bring you to the land"], and they believe in G-d and fulfill His commandments ["I will be for you

G-d"]. The Final redemption will reach completion by a gradual process, like the Exodus from Egypt. The message is don't despair, HANG in there.

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**WISDOM & WIT**  
by Shmuel Himelstein

When R' Yaakov Kamenetsky visited his family in Eretz Yisrael the last time before he died, his relatives were surprised to see him taking off his tefillin at the end of davening and then putting on tefillin of Rabbenu Tam (tefillin with certain differences from the ones most Jews use, and which some Jews put on after the davening, in order to fulfill both views regarding tefillin). The relatives knew that R' Yaakov had never put on the tefillin of Rabbenu Tam until then, and wondered why he did so now.

"You see," said R' Yaakov, "about fifty years ago I had a long discussion with R' Faivel Mendelowitz about putting on the tefillin of Rabbenu Tam. To bolster his case, R' Faivel mentioned that in his late years the Chafetz Chayim had also started putting on the tefillin of Rabbenu Tam. At the time I told him, 'Well, the Chafetz Chaim started putting on the tefillin of Rabbenu Tam when he turned ninety. When I turn ninety, I will also do the same.' That was fifty years ago. As I had given my word at that time, when I turned ninety I too started putting on the tefillin of Rabbenu Tam."

• *Perfect Tzedaka is that given even before the poor person asks for it.*

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## A Return to Ritual Purity

*Adapted from Orot, p. 81  
(Orot HaTechiyah, section 35)*

These Torah readings (Tazri'a and M'tzora) discuss at length topics that are among the most challenging for us to relate to. What relevance do the laws of ritual purity and impurity - after childbirth, for those with Tzaraat, and for various types of male and female discharges - hold for us? Why does the Torah place such emphasis on these matters? Why do we feel so far removed from them?

## The Tahara Axiom

In his book Orot, Rav Kook posited the following principle: The degree of purity required is a function of the comprehensiveness of the spiritual framework. The more inclusive a framework is, encompassing more aspects of life, the more rigorous are the requirements for tahara, ritual purity.

The Temple and its service are a classic example. The Temple projected an ethical and holy influence on a wide

range of life's aspects - from the noble heights of divine inspiration and prophecy, through the powers of imagination and the emotions (the outbursts of joy and awe in the Temple service), all the way down to the physical level of flesh and blood (the actual sacrifices). Because its impact reached even the lowest levels of physical existence - which are nonetheless integrally connected to all other aspects of life in an organic whole - the Temple and its service required an exact and precise purity.

By contrast, a spiritual and moral influence that is directed only towards the intellect does not require such a refined degree of physical purity. Thus, the Sages taught, Torah may be studied even when impure.

"Is not My word like fire? says G-d" (Yirmiyahu 23:29) - "Just as fire does not become impure, so too words of Torah cannot become impure" (B'rachot 22a).

## Changes throughout History

As the Jewish people returned from exile in Babylonia and rebuilt the Temple, it was necessary to revive the Temple's strict requirements of tahara. For this reason, Ezra enacted a series of enactments stressing the need for greater ritual purity during this period.

The long exile that followed the Second Temple period, however, greatly weakened the emotive and imaginative abilities of the people. The intensity and aesthetic quality of spiritual life became impoverished, and the corresponding need for a rigorous degree of purity

was accordingly diminished. Thus we find that one of the six orders of the Mishna (compiled in the Land of Israel) is Taharot, dealing exclusively with matters of ritual purity. Of the 37 tractates of the Talmud (composed in the Babylonian exile), however, only one belongs to this order. Similarly, the Talmud repealed Ezra's decree obligating immersion before Torah study.

What remained for the Jewish people in exile? Only the Torah and its intellectual influence. It still involved the physical realm through the practical observance of mitzvot, but the intermediate stages of imagination and feeling were bypassed. In exile, we lament, "Nothing remains but this Torah" (from the Selichot prayers).

In the long centuries of exile, meticulousness in matters of ritual purity lost its obligatory nature. It became associated with idealistic longings, the province of the pious few.

## A Return to Tahara

The Hasidic movement of the 1700s aspired to restore the concepts of physical purity to the masses. Hasidism places a greater emphasis on the imaginative and emotional faculties - particularly through prayer and song - than the intellectual. As a result, it awakened a greater need for personal and physical purity. This objective certainly contains a healthy kernel, although it needs additional direction and refinement.

Especially now, with the national renaissance of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, these aspirations for

physical tahara should be renewed and expanded. Our national renewal complements the renewed yearning for spirituality; and the healthy desire to restore the nation and heal its national soul applies to all aspects of life, including physical purity.

It is precisely in the camps of the Jewish army that the Torah demands a high level of purity: For HaShem your G-d makes His presence known in your camp, so as to deliver you and grant you victory over your enemy. Your camp must therefore be holy. (D'varim 23:15)

Together with the renewal of our national strength and vitality, there must be a corresponding reinforcement of emotive and physical purity. This will help prepare the basis for an integrated national life that encompasses a complete rebirth of the people: from the highest intellectual pursuits, to the simple joy in life and living.

## HOATZIN

very few birds live by munching on vegetation - too heavy, low in energy, slow to digest... but this strange bird - pronounced "watseen" has a stomach like a cow's to cope with its diet of leaves. Its crop is enormous, nearly a third of its body weight, and acts like the first chamber of a

cow's stomach. The Hoatzin is the slowest bird to digest a meal (2 days). A result of its diet is its nickname "stink bird"... very social, live in groups, about the size of chickens, poor flyers, noisy. Biologists now

consider them to be in an order by themselves, with no close relatives. They are rather tame but get highly stressed by human contact... their meat is rarely eaten by humans. (The i book of animals)

# ParshaPix explanations

- Following the birth of a baby boy, there is a 7 day period of Tum'a for the mother followed by a 33 day period before Korbanot. See the Sedra Summary.
- Knife for Brit Mila follows the 7th day. I.E. on the 8th day.
- For the birth of a baby girl, the period of Tum'a and Tahara is 14 days and 66 days.
- Then come the turtle dove and lamb, which are two parts of the Korban Yoledet, the offerings of the woman who has given birth, after 40 or 80 days.
- There is a hand afflicted by a NEGA... this represents various N'GA'IM that can afflict the body of a person.
- The shirt with a NEGA represents those garments and materials that are able to be afflicted with NIG'EI HABEGED (wool, linen, leather).
- That lizard-like reptile is a CHAMELION, noted for changing colors - a significant factor in the determination of NEGA'IM.

The traffic light also refers to the changing of colors in the NEGA'IM. This is a particularly appropriate graphic to use for this, since its colors are all mentioned in the sedra. Hair in a wound changing to yellow (or not). And the term Y'RAKRAK, greenish (or maybe strong green). So too ADAMDAM, reddish, or powerful red.

Bottom-centerish HaRav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohein Kook, zt"l, wearing glasses. This stands for the oft repeated V'RA'A HAKOHEN, and the kohein saw. Searching the Tanach, one finds that the phrase occurs 14 times altogether, 13 in Tazri'a (chapter 13 therein) and once, a 14th time, in chapter 14 (M'tzora). And to make the life of a Bar Mitzva boy who is trying to study this parsha miserable, the V'RA'A HAKOHEN phrase comes in 8 different TROP-combinations. And this doesn't take into account the 5 V'RA'AHU HAKOHENs with their TROP variations. And this is also not to mention the 40 HEI-VAV-ALEFs in this short sedra, 18 of which are HI (meaning she) and 22 of which are HU (meaning he), but in most cases really meaning "it". And none of this mentions M'tzora, another hard sedra to learn well, which is more often combined with Tazri'a than not. But we digress...

In the lower left corner is a calendar marked with a I. This obviously represents HaChodesh and the mitzva to make the calendar, and the designation of Nissan as the first

month among the months.

- ✂ The big camel is a BIG GAMMAL, which sounds like and reminds us of a BIG GIMMEL, as in the word V'HITGALACH.
- ✂ The number sign, a.k.a. SULAMIT (in Hebrew), pound sign, hash, cross-hash, hex, and the best name: octothorpe. In this ParshaPix, it represents the SH'TI & EIREV, the warp & woof weave of garments afflicted by a NEGA.
- ✂ There is a mezuzah next to the traffic light. It stands for the other meaning of MEZUZA, namely doorposts, which are mentioned in the Maftir's description of the night of the Exodus and the one-time only requirement of putting the blood of the Korban Pesach on the doorposts and on the lintel. This is NOT part of the rules of Korban Pesach in perpetuity, but just for Pesach Mitzrayim.
- ✂ Similarly, the requirement of wearing a belt - representative of being ready to travel at a moment's notice, was only for Pesach Mitzrayim and is represented by the belt above the camel.
- ✂ Top-right is a 19th century North African circumcision shield - as in the mitzva to circumcise a baby boy on his 8th day of life. The mitzva of Mila is counted from its occurrence in Parshat Lech Lecha, but occurs in Tazri'a, as well, teaching us some halachic details.
- ✂ Further down on the right are the three components of a traditional

Bedikat Chameitz kit - feather, candle, and wooden spoon. Only the candle is mandated by halacha. The mitzva comes from the reading of Maftir for Parshat HaChodesh (from Parshat Bo).

- ✂ The thin sliver of Moon is close to the first visibility of the lunar crescent, from the mitzva of Kiddush HaChodesh. It is from the Maftir and it gives the special parsha its name.
- ✂ Under the moon is a baby goat, equally eligible as Korban Pesach as a lamb is, although the lamb seems to have better PR. Either a lamb or a kid needs to be male, unblemished, and within its first year.
- ✂ Bottom-right is a picture of the first president of the State of Israel - Chaim Weizmann, representing the repeated reference in the haftara of HaChodesh, to the NASI of Israel. In the photo, he is presenting US President Harry Truman with a Sefer Torah.
- ✂ Notice the bullets of these ParshaPix explanations.
- ✂ Notice too the icons that flank the page numbers in the footers of the pages of TT this week - one representing the first Torah's reading and the other standing for the Maftir.
- ✂ And notice the new MazalPic for the coming month of Nisan. Take it as a visual TTriddle.

## The Jerusalem Institute of Jewish Law Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean

Lesson # 557

### Secular authorities appoint a court of less than 3 judges

Tur points out that in the past, authorization was derived from the Exilarch. Accordingly there can no longer be such authorization, since the position of Exilarch no longer exists. And there is currently no court of ordained judges in the Land of Israel. It therefore seems to Tur that the authorization that the secular ruler grants to a Jewish judge to judge his community has no legal effect. Nevertheless, after some discussion, he concludes that although the written authorization from the secular authorities normally is of no value, it is effective if the community accepts such person to be its judge. Tur thus separates the legal effect of a secular governmental authorization of individual judges into two situations: an imposed judge and a judge accepted by the community.

The most often cited decision of this subject is a reponsum of Ribash who lived in the 14th century. The following controversy was submitted to him for decision. The leading rabbi of France died. He had founded many schools of learning, had ordained many rabbis and was accepted by the Jews of France as

the head of the Jewish community. He was also so recognized by the King of France. During his lifetime, he ordained his son, whom the people decided would be a worthy successor to his father. The various Jewish communities accepted him as chief rabbi of France and the King of France approved the appointment. Another of his father's pupils, a rabbi Isaiah, however, thought that he should be recognized as the leading rabbi. Isaiah went to the chief rabbi of Germany and obtained a ruling naming him the chief rabbi of France and placing anyone who opposed him under a ban. Ribash was asked to decide whether the decision of the chief rabbi of Germany was valid. Ribash first discusses the concept of what western Jews call "ordination". He shows that it has nothing to do with the concept of ordination, or the procedure of authorization described in the Talmud. He describes the reason for the current ordination and the limited authority which it carries, and, as one ground for his decision, concludes that the rabbis of Germany had no jurisdiction to decide the fate of the Jews of France. Especially since it was only a single German rabbi who made the decree of excommunication. Ribash continues, assuming that the chief rabbi of Germany has authority to direct the French Jews as to whom to make the leading rabbi of France, his decision is nevertheless invalid for several reasons. First, the son had the primary right to take his father's place especially since he was designated for the post by his father. In addition, the son had actually filled this position with distinction for several years before the controversy arose. Once a person has occupied an

important position, he is not to be removed except for a good cause. Moreover, all the Jewish communities of France had accepted the son as their leader. Finally the son was appointed with the approval of the king and, in monetary matters, the law of the secular government, is the controlling law.

## CHIZUK AND IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra  
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael -  
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

### The Role of the Kohen

The Kohen is charged with the task of declaring the metzora impure. The Torah instructs the Kohanim to “distinguish between the sacred and the profane and between the contaminated and the pure, and to teach the Children of Israel all of the decrees that Hashem had spoken to them through Moshe” (Vayikra 10:10-11). This speaks to more than just examining blemishes. As our spiritual leadership, the Kohanim must articulate a clear message of Torah values.

Like Kohanim, Rabbis and educators (our spiritual leaders of today) must articulate a clear message of Torah values. They have to teach about the mitzva of dwelling in the Land of Israel, the centrality of Eretz Yisrael to the Jewish experience, the incredible opportunity we have today to return Home, and the exciting moment in history in which we live.

One Kohen, Ezra HaSofer articulated a message of aliya. He led a Return to

Zion, beseeching Jews of the Diaspora to return home to the Land of Israel and rebuild the Holy Temple. Tragically, the overwhelming majority of Jews did not return, preferring instead to live comfortably in Babylonia. The Second Commonwealth did not manage to capture the glory of the First.

It's not enough to “support Israel”. North American Rabbis have to encourage aliya. Much lip service is paid to the State of Israel in Shabbat morning sermons, but are Rabbis leading by example? Are they willing to practice what they preach?

As a synagogue Rabbi myself before making aliya, I found that there is cowardice on the part of our leadership. Many rabbis feel that they must stay in the Diaspora to tend to their flock. But were more pulpit rabbis to make aliya, the flock would follow. If the religious leadership doesn't make the leap, how can we expect anyone else to? Rabbis have to lead by example, and in this case - leave by example!

At the very least there should be a yearning. Even if aliya does not work with one's current life situation, he should yearn to be living here. It should be on one's horizon. Our Sages tells us that among the questions one will be asked after they leave this world is, “did you yearn for salvation?” (Shabbat 31a). As the Kohen HaGadol MeiEchav of the last century, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook wrote: “Yearning for salvation is the sustaining strength of Diaspora Jewry” (Orot, Eretz Yisrael, Chap. 1).

*Rabbi Shimshon HaKohen Nadel, Jerusalem*

## TTTRIDDLES

Prizes for best solution sets are furnished by Last issue's (Sh'mini) TTriddles:

Last week, we kind of got carried away with the name of the sedra, as you will see. A disproportionate number of the EIGHT TTriddles point to SH'MINI.

[1] Mother of Triton, Proteus, Nereid...

The mother planet of the moons Triton, Proteus, Nereid and ten other known moons is NEPTUNE, which is the eighth (Sh'mini) planet in the Solar System. If you accept Pluto's demotion to dwarf planet and its removal from the list of (full) planets, then we've only got the eight. FYI... Neptune and Triton - its largest moon by far - were both discovered in 1846. Nereid wasn't discovered until more than a century later. Five moons were discovered in 1989 and another five in 2002 and 2003.

[2] no cruel & unusual punishment

This is one of the provisions of the EIGHTH (Sh'mini) amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is part of the Bill of Rights. "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted."

[3] First Korean-American to be mayor of a major US city

Sukhee Kang... with his 2008 election, he became the first Korean-American to serve as mayor of a major U.S. city. He was re-elected as mayor with more than 64% of the vote in November 2010. Born and raised in South Korea, Mayor Kang

and his wife Joanne immigrated to the United States in 1977 after his graduation from Korea University in Seoul... The city of which he is mayor is Irvine, (southern) California... it is home to over 200,000 people... very low violent crime rate... very high median income... If you want to call anyone in Irvine, from the mayor to the dog catcher, you need the areacode 949 (like the TT issue number).

[4] It's mentioned in the sedra; its \_\_\_ is the absolute largest but relatively the smallest

Fill in the blank space in the TTriddle with the word "egg" and the TTriddle becomes much simpler plain question. One of the non-kosher bird (types) listed in Sh'mini and in R'ei is the BAT HAYAANA, generally translated as Ostrich. It is well known that the Ostrich is the largest extant bird in the world and that its eggs are the largest of any bird's. Less known is that fact that as large as its eggs are, if we relate egg size to the size of the bird, then the Ostrich has the smallest egg of any bird. The Kiwi, by the way (the bird, not the fruit) has the largest egg relative to body size of any bird. Hummingbirds have the smallest eggs.

[5] Yochanan Gamliel went to a Simchat Torah Brit

Divrei HaYamim Alef 12 lists great warriors from the tribe of Gad who "went over to David". Yochanan is listed as HASH'MINI, the eighth. Gamliel ben P'datzur was the Nasi of Menashe who offered his gifts to the dedication of the Mishkan on the EIGHTH day (U'VAYOM HA-SH'MINI...). Simchat Torah is YOM HASH'MINI of Sukkot, i.e. SH'MINI ATZERET. Brit Mila is done (preferably)

on the EIGHTH day (as we see in this week's sedra).

[6] 350 5th Ave., Machu Picchu, Grand Canyon, Taj Mahal...

More SH'MINI. The concept of the "Eighth Wonder of the World" is a term sometimes used to describe things in comparison to the Seven Wonders of the World, the widely-known list of seven remarkable constructions of classical antiquity. There are many natural and manmade sites that are sometimes referred to as the Eighth Wonder of the World. These are not part of an official list, but since the concept of Seven Wonders has been around for a long time, the term Eighth Wonder is used as a "WOW, this thing would have made the list too" kind of idea. 350 5th Avenue is the address of the Empire State Building. The term has been applied to it. So too, to Machu Picchu, "an ancient Inca fortress city in the Andes northwest of Cuzco, Peru. Its extensive ruins, including elaborate terraces, were discovered in 1911", the Grand Canyon (not the shopping mall in Haifa), the Taj Mahal, and many other things - see further for a few more.

[7] Champion 3-letter word is a palindrome

Let's take a break from the EIGHTH theme... there is a 3-letter word in Parshat Sh'mini, that has the highest gimatriya of any three letter word. In the phrase AL TEISHT, do not drink, referring to wine (and other intoxicating beverages) that a kohen may not drink before doing AVODA in the Mikdash. TAV (400), SHIN (300), TAV (400) gives a gimatriya of 1100. The only three-letter combination with a higher numeric value

is TAV-TAV-TAV, which isn't a word.

[8] Great Wall of China, Stonehenge, Statue of Liberty, Panama Canal, Sydney Opera House, Pink and White Terraces NZ...

And here are some of the other places that have been called the Eighth Wonder. FYI... The oldest and most famous list of Seven Wonders of the World is referred to as the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Of the seven, only one still exists - viz. the Pyramids of Giza (Egypt). USA Today and Good Morning America came up with a list of the "New Seven Wonders". The list includes the Polar Ice Caps, the Internet, and the Old City of Jerusalem. How about that?!

**TAZRI'A** Adapted from  
**Unlocking the Torah Text**  
by **Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**

## Simcha or Sin?

**Context:** Parshat Tazri'a opens with one of the strangest examples of biblical ritual "impurity": tum'at yoledet, tum'a resulting from childbirth.

The Torah relates that, following the birth of a male child, a childbearing mother enters a seven-day period of tum'a, while following the birth of a female child, a fourteen-day period of tum'a is mandated. In each case, these days of tum'a are then followed by much lengthier periods (thirty-three days after the birth of a male child and sixty-six days after the birth of a female child) of modified separation from sanctified objects.

Finally, at the close of each extended period, the mother brings a burnt offering and a sin offering to the Temple to mark her full reentry into society.

**Questions:** Bearing a child is clearly one of the most highly sanctified acts possible; the first divine blessing/commandment given to man while still in the Garden of Eden; the clearest demonstration of man's partnership with God. Why, then, does a woman automatically incur a state of tum'a as a result of childbirth?

What is the significance of the different separation periods mandated in response to the birth of a male and female child, respectively? Aren't all children of equal value?

Finally, and most problematically, what is the significance of the korbanot brought by a yoledet, a childbearing mother? In particular, why does the Torah instruct a woman to bring a sin offering in the aftermath of childbirth? What possible "sin" could be associated with the glorious act of bringing a new life into the world?

### Approaches:

**A.** The most basic, and in some ways the most problematic, approach to the perplexing issues surrounding the tum'at yoledet is offered by a group of scholars including Rabbeinu Bachya and the Kli Yakar. These commentaries view both the tum'a resulting from childbirth and the sin offering in its aftermath as a reflection of the primal sin of Chava, the first woman. In response to Chava's role in the consumption of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, God condemns her and her

female progeny to the travails of childbirth.

While giving birth to a child is, therefore, a glorious mitzva, the pain and difficulty associated with the process is the product of sin.

This approach, however, gives rise to serious issues concerning the nature of divine reward and punishment. As we have noted before, Judaism clearly rejects the Christian notion of "original sin". We are not guilty, in perpetuity, of the sin committed by Adam and Chava. On this issue the Torah is clear: "Fathers shall not die because of their children, nor shall children die because of their fathers. Each individual will die in his own sin." We are each held culpable only for our own failings and not for the failings of others, past, present or future. How, then, can these scholars suggest that each childbearing woman across history must somehow atone for a crime committed by her ancestor, at the beginning of time?

The key to understanding this approach may well lie in a distinction that we have noted elsewhere. While Judaism absolutely rejects the Christian concept of "original sin," we cannot deny the reality of "intergenerational reverberation."

We are not responsible, in any way, for the transgression committed by Adam and Chava at the beginning of time. We are, however, affected by that sin's ramifications. This is not a punishment, but a reality of life. Had Adam and Chava not sinned, we would now be living a very different existence in the Garden of Eden.

Similarly, we are all concretely

connected to each other across the generations. Such overarching life issues as where we are born, to whom, into what environment - and, in fact, whether or not we are born at all - are determined not only by God, but also by our parents and by those who came before them as well. Even more importantly, our decisions and actions today will critically affect the lives of our children and their progeny tomorrow.

At the decisive moment of childbirth, therefore, the Torah graphically reminds the new parents, through a series of rituals, of the phenomenon of "inter-generational reverberation." The mother's state of tum'a, her consequent period of physical separation from her husband, the offerings she brings in the aftermath of these events, all result from actions committed by her primal ancestor, millennia earlier. The Torah's message could not be clearer: We are each partially a product of what came before. How careful, then, must new parents be with their own continuing decisions and actions - for those very decisions and actions will help shape the lives of generations to come.

**B.** An entirely different approach is suggested by Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch. This scholar notes that the Torah sets the stage for the passage describing tum'at yoledet with the unusual phrase ISHA KI TAZRI'A, "when a woman yields seed..."

By choosing the verb LIZRO'A, "to yield seed," in describing human conception - as opposed to the usual biblical term, lit'hor, "to conceive" - the Torah stresses the universal, physical character of childbirth. This verb is used on only one other occasion in the text - in conjunction with the creation of the earth's vegetation, which is described as

MAZRIA ZERA L'MINEIHU, "yielding seed to its kind".

"The highest and noblest occupation", says Hirsch, "on which the whole future of the human race is built... is of purely physical nature. Man originates, grows and exists like a plant..." At the moment of childbirth, the childbearing mother, involved in "the most sublime procedure of her earthly calling", is forced to painfully submit to the laws of nature. As her child enters the world, she becomes one with all the other creatures of creation, governed by processes beyond her control.

Tellingly, the Torah specifically chooses this moment, the moment when a new soul's arrival into the world is bounded by natural law, to underscore man's unique ability to transcend that law. After childbirth, the childbearing mother confronts an immediate challenge. By deciding to follow Torah law, she embarks upon a conscious journey from tum'a to tahara. Step-by-step, she is guided past the physical constraints of natural law towards a renewed awareness of her own spiritual potential. Her freely chosen journey towards complete religious involvement reminds all that man, once born, is a morally free agent.

**C.** An additional perspective on tum'at yoledet can be suggested, based upon our prior observations concerning the general theme of tum'a.

The state of tum'a often seems to occur in response to an individual's encounter with a profound event or experience. God does not want us to pass through life unaffected by what crosses our path. By mandating a ritually limited state following such encounters, the Torah creates a forced response. The period of

tum'a teaches us that something has changed, that we must be responsive to all experiences that touch our lives.

Few events are as potentially life altering as childbirth. The Torah therefore establishes a period of tum'a to encourage the mother to assimilate the many complex truths with which she has come face-to-face: from the reality of her own mortality to her sublime partnership with God in creation, and finally to the responsibilities she now bears towards her newborn child.

The childbearing mother's world has changed forever. The Torah insists that she recognize that fact. ❏

## Parsha Points to Ponder

### Tazri'a

1) Why does the Torah require that a Kohein declare the person a metzora (13:3,5,6,8, etc.)? Why can't he simply be impure based on the signs which he sees himself?

2) If tzaraat is a sign of spiritual failings in a person, how can a person with tzaraat covering his entire body be spared the entire purification process and be immediately pure (13:12-13)?

3) Why does tzaraat of the clothing go immediately to a waiting period (hesger) without any immediate declarations of impurity (13:5), while tzaraat of the body can be declared impure immediately (for example - 13:3)?

## Parsha Points to Ponder

by Rabbi Dov Lipman

## Portion from the Portion Renewal of the Moon

This Shabbat, we read the last of the four special Torah portions leading up to Pesach. We read verses 12:1-20 from the book of Sh'mot that is G-d's first command to the whole nation - HACHODESH HAZEH LACHEM ROSH CHODASHIM, RISHON HU LACHEM L'CHODSHEI HASHANA. This renewal of the moon shall be unto you the beginning of New Moons, it shall be unto you the first of the months of the year." This verse contains two mitzvot - KIDDUSH HACHODESH fixing the beginning of the month when the new moon becomes visible and making the order of the months of the year start with Nisan, the month of the GEULA - Redemption.

What is so special about the consecration of the beginning of the month - that Kiddush HaChodesh was the first mitzva Hashem commanded the Jewish nation?

Some people might think that there would be other commands more appropriate for this weighty position. But if we examine the intricate ceremony of KIDUSH HACHODESH, we understand that the meaning and object of this law must be something higher than just the astronomical calculations involved in setting the date of the new month.

Let's explain some of the laws involved in KIDDUSH HACHODESH. Witnesses who saw the moon in the evening should go to Jerusalem to tell Beit Din. They could leave on their journey - even on Shabbat - because of the importance of their task. And if

a witness was sick he could even ride on a horse on Shabbat to get to the Beit Din. And even if the moon was seen so clearly that probably everyone had seen it that way and they could think there was no reason for them to desecrate the Shabbat to testify in court about something that everyone would know - the witnesses should still go on their journey even on Shabbat because of the importance of their task.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch points out that when reviewing the process of examining the witnesses, we can not but notice that the whole procedure is related to the realm of human social life and not just the astronomical phenomena of Nature. MISHPAT is the character of the procedure, therefore it can only be done in the daytime, and must be completed in daytime. It can only be performed by a bench of three competent judges, and two witnesses are required (Rosh Hashana 25b).

If on the 30th day of a month, while still daytime, the new moon is visible and it has been seen by the judges, the court and all of Israel; or if the thorough examination of the witnesses who come to testify regarding the moon has been completed but the judges did not state MEKUDASH - "it is consecrated", then the 30th is not the 1st of the new month. This shows us that it is not the actual condition in the sky, but the consecrating declaration of the representatives of Israel that is the decisive factor on which the beginning of the new month begins. But why?

ROSH CHODESH is one of the MO'ADIM. Rav Hirsch points out that MO'ED comes from the root YAAD -

to call a meeting. The MO'ADIM, including Rosh Chodesh, are times fixed for our meeting with Hashem. Rav Hirsch explains that Hashem wants this meeting to be voluntary on both sides. It shouldn't be the master ordering his servants to attend. Rather G-d specifies a time when He would like His people to come to Him, but leaves the fixing of the exact day up to His people. This makes the "coming together" mutual.

Each time the moon finds the sun again Hashem wants His people to find Him again and be illuminated.

## Parsha Points to Ponder

### Suggested answers

1) The S'forno teaches that the Kohein's involvement in the process would lead to the Kohein instructing the person regarding what he did wrong which led to the tzaraat and this would inspire the person to repent and pray, and would enable the Kohein to pray for him as well.

2) The Kli Yakar answers that the shame of having the tzaraat covering his entire body will certainly motivate the person to repent without needing the entire process to inspire that repentance.

3) The Ohr HaChayim explains that since clothing has to be destroyed as soon as it is declared impure, G-D does not want people to lose possessions, and rather gives the person time to repent and, hopefully, cause the tzaraat to disappear from the clothing by the time the waiting period is over.

## The Puah Institute

*for Fertility and Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha*

### Who is considered an Expert?

Last time we saw that an expert doctor is afforded a certain security against legal action. One reader who is a doctor told me that if this is the case then he is going to cancel his medical malpractice insurance. However, if the doctor makes a serious mistake or causes more than acceptable damage then he can be held responsible (see Responsa Tzitz Eliezer 4:13). The concept is that if we were to sue doctors for every possible outcome, then nobody would actually agree to practice medicine and people would suffer and die of disease that could have been treated. But they are still cases when the doctor must be held liable.

As we have seen, the Shulchan Aruch directs us to go to the expert medical professional and rely on their opinion. But who is considered an expert, after all medical expertise and knowledge change very regularly? Until recently it was thought that if someone suffering from a heart attack stayed at home he had as much chance of survival as one who was immediately taken to hospital. Today we know that this is not true and that the best results are gained from getting to hospital. And we could bring such examples from all areas of medicine. How can we claim that anyone is an expert since the definition of medical expertise changes?

The Mishna (Rosh HaShana) already stated that we are obligated to follow the Rabbis in our generation. One cannot say that I only listen to the Rabbis of the previous generations who were great and held authority, and I thus ignore

contemporary Rabbis. Instead we are obliged to follow the Rabbis in our own generation and rely on their opinions.

The same principle can be applied to medicine in each generation. We are obliged to utilize medicine and seek the advice of doctors. If that is the case then we can apply the same principle. We are obliged to follow medicine and all that we have is modern medicine as it stands today.

Conventional medicine is based on scientific evidence, that has been arrived at through experimentation. In scientific tests, controls are used and statistical information is available for any treatment or drug as to the benefits and any unwanted side effects. When the benefits outweigh the costs and the treatment gives the desired improvement then the doctor suggests its use.

This type of medicine is halachically condoned and a doctor working under these conditions and guidelines can be called an "expert". But what of unconventional treatment, natural remedies and supplementary medicine, are we permitted to use these? What if they contain non-kosher ingredients or contravene the laws of Shabbat?

We will discuss this question next time.