

PARSHAT TAZRIA

28 Adar II – 5 Nissan 5784
7-13 April 2024

Torah: Leviticus 12:1-13:59
HafTorah: Kings II 4:42-5:19

Calendar

Chaplains have monthly calendars available.

Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

Psalm 117

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

Psalms Daily

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzah for you to be able to make blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain/Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

Mirror, Mirror, On the Wall

This week's Torah portion speaks about various physical blemishes and conditions which can afflict a person. The Talmud, in the tractate Negaim, which deals with these types of blemishes and conditions, notes that "a person sees all kinds of blemishes except for their own."

The story is told of a prominent doctor who was known for his generosity but was also prone to blowing his own trumpet. One day he was traveling when he saw the local rabbi walking. He stopped to offer the rabbi a ride. As they traveled together, the doctor, as was his wont, began to speak about his achievements. "You know, Rabbi, I get a lot of patients who can't afford to pay but I never turn them away. I treat them exactly the same as my wealthier patients." "I also do that," replied the rabbi. The doctor figured that perhaps the rabbi was referring to the spiritual counsel he gave his spiritual "patients." "Also," he continued, "a lot of times patients need expensive drugs. If they can't afford it, I provide them for free." "I also do that," rejoined the rabbi. Maybe he means that sometimes he gives people material help also, the doctor thought. "Sometimes people need days of post-operative care. I give it to them voluntarily, even though I have so little time." "I also do that."

So it went, the doctor continuing to lavish praise on himself while the rabbi answered each time, "I also do that." Eventually the doctor couldn't take it anymore and he asked the rabbi: "Rabbi, I don't understand. You're not a doctor, how can you do all these things?" "No, all I meant was I also do that - I also only talk about my own good qualities!"

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, taught us that another person is like a mirror—if we find ourselves noticing faults in others, it is because they exist within

ourselves. This is not such a foreign concept - it is common in psychological terms to speak of one person "projecting" their own faults onto another. It is incumbent upon us to realize that when we see a fault in somebody else, it is only because we need to work on that very fault within ourselves. As the Talmud and the above story illustrate, we tend not to notice our own faults except in others! The whole world is a mirror designed to show us how we can work on ourselves and our own deficiencies. Once we realize this, and we understand that the fault we see in another person is just the way in which Divine Providence shows us our own shortcomings, it becomes a lot easier to be tolerant and understanding of others.

By Mordechai Wollenberg

Why Animals Come Before People

The book of Leviticus, perhaps more than any other book in the Torah, is about man's service to G-d. The book is packed with Mitzvot and lessons, from how to bring an offering to G-d, to how to treat one's fellow neighbor. The word "Adam" - "man" - is the first word following the opening statement of the book. It is therefore striking that when it comes to the laws of ritual purity, the Torah only addresses the laws pertaining to people after it addresses the purity of animals. At the end of last week's portion, Shemini, the Torah addresses the laws of kosher meat and describes the instances in which an animal becomes a source of impurity, concluding with:

This is the law regarding animals, birds, all living creatures that move in water and all creatures that creep on the ground, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.

Only then, in this week's parshah, do we read about the laws of ritual purity for humans.

If the book is primarily addressed to humankind, why are the laws of

human purity written only after the laws of animal purity?

According to the Midrash, the order of the laws of purity follows the order of creation. Since man was created after the animals, the laws of his ritual purity were stated after the laws pertaining to animals.

This, however, merely leads to another question: Why indeed were the animals created before humans?

The Talmud offers two possible explanations.

A) Human was created last so that, should he become too arrogant, he could be told "even a mosquito preceded you," implying that man is inferior to the rest of creation.

B) In order that humankind would benefit from a full world prepared just for him. As the Midrash puts it: "Man was invited to the banquet once the meal was already prepared."

These two reasons appear to be polar opposites. While the first reason indicates that the human is inferior to the animals, the second indicates that he is in fact superior to all animals, which is precisely why he was created at the final step of creation. So which is it? Are we inferior to the mosquito or are we the crown jewel of creation?

Both are true. Man alone, amongst all creations in the universe, is able to defy his Creator. All other creations must follow their G-d-given nature and instincts. In this, man is indeed inferior to all animals, as we read in Tanya: "For the lusting drive in his animal soul is capable of lusting also after forbidden things, which are contrary to G-d's will..." In this he is inferior to and more loathsome and abominable than unclean animals and insects and reptiles. Yet, there is more to the story of man. Man is also unique in his ability to choose to rise above his instincts. Man was given the intellectual power, the spiritual freedom and fortitude, to enlighten and improve himself. Man alone has the ability to take the spiritually lowest material—

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material capable of defying the Divine—and envelop and elevate it. Man is able to transform himself and the world around him to a place hospitable to the Divine. Man was created last because he is inferior to the mosquito in his ability to choose evil. Yet this inferiority is the very source of his

superiority! When man toils with himself, when he plows and plants the soil of his heart, he indeed becomes superior to all creatures. For he alone is able to choose. He alone has the ability to overcome his instincts and nature. He alone can plant the earth of his heart and cause holiness to grow. We must understand

that G-d does not seek perfection, He seeks the transformative power of toil. Specifically because we were created spiritually inferior to the animals, when we choose the right path, we ascend to the greatest spiritual heights.

By Menachem Feldman

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, April 7, 2024-28 Adar II, 5784

Roman Decree Against Ritual Circumcision Rescinded (2nd century)

In Talmudic times, Adar 28 was celebrated to commemorate the rescinding of a Roman decree against ritual circumcision, Torah study and keeping the Shabbat.

Purim Cairo (1524)

Ahmed Pasha was the governor of Egypt under Selim II "The Magnificent," the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Ahmed plotted to cede from the Ottoman Empire and declare himself Sultan of Egypt. He requested of his Jewish minter, Abraham de Castro, to mint new Egyptian currency stamped with his image. Instead, De Castro went to Constantinople, and informed Selim II of Ahmed's plot. Ahmed decided to exact revenge against Cairo's Jewish community. He imprisoned many of their leaders, and threatened to execute them unless he was paid an outrageously large ransom. The Jews of Cairo fasted and prayed to G-d. A large sum of money was collected but it did not approach the amount of money Ahmed demanded. Before the planned executions, Ahmed visited his bathhouse. As he was leaving the bathhouse he was attacked and severely wounded by a group of his own advisors and governors. Ahmed escaped but was later captured and beheaded. From then on, the Jews of Cairo observed the 28th of Adar as a day of celebration. A special Megillah (scroll) written to commemorate the miracle was read in Cairo every year on this day.

Monday, April 8, 2024-29 Adar II, 5784

Jews Commanded 1st Mitzvah (1313 BCE)

Shortly before sundown on the 29th of Adar, G-d commanded Moses regarding the mitzvah of sanctifying the crescent new moon and establishing a lunar calendar. This is the first mitzvah the Jews were given as a nation.

Napoleon's "Sanhedrin" Dissolved (1807)

A few months after its creation, Napoleon's "Sanhedrin" (rabbinical supreme court) was dissolved. The Sanhedrin was created to approve certain religious regulations requested by the French "Assembly of Notables." The regulations were designed to blur the distinction between Jews and non-Jews. The rulings of this pseudo-Sanhedrin were never adopted by Jewish communities.

Tuesday, April 9, 2024-1 Nissan, 5784

Creation of man (in thought) (3761 BCE)

The Talmud (*Rosh Hashanah 10b-11a*) cites two opinions as to the date of G-d's creation of the

universe: according to Rabbi Eliezer, "The world was created in Tishrei" while the "thought", or idea, of creation was created in the month of Nissan.

The Patriarchs (1813-1506 BCE)

According to the Talmud, the three Patriarchs of the Jewish people - Abraham (1813-1638 BCE), Isaac (1713-1533 BCE) and Jacob (1653-1506 BCE) – were all born and passed away in the month of Nissan.

Jewish Calendar Inaugurated (1313 BCE)

On the first of Nissan of the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE - two weeks before the Exodus), G-d showed Moses the crescent of the new moon and told him, "When you see the moon like this, sanctify [the new month]." This ushered in the first Jewish month and commenced the lunar calendar Jews have been following ever since.

Mishkan Inaugurated (1312 BCE)

On the eighth day following a 7-day training and initiation period, the portable Mishkan built by the Children of Israel in the Sinai desert was erected, Aaron and his sons began serving as priests, and the Divine Presence came to dwell in the Mishkan; special offerings were brought, including a series of gifts by Nachshon ben Aminadav, the Prince of the Tribe of Judah.

Death of Nadav and Avihu (1312 BCE)

On the day the Mishkan was inaugurated (see above), "Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire in it, and put incense on it, and offered strange fire before G-d, which He commanded them not. A fire went out from G-d, and consumed them, and they died before G-d." - *Leviticus 10:1-2*

Wednesday, April 10, 2024-2 Nissan, 5784

First Red Heifer Prepared (1312 BCE)

On the 2nd of Nissan, one day after the inauguration of the Tabernacle, Moses prepared the very first Red Heifer, in order to ritually purify the Jewish nation in preparation for the bringing of the Paschal Lamb in the newly erected Sanctuary.

Passing of Rashab (1920)

The fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneersohn ("Rashab"), was born in the White Russian town of Lubavitch in 1860. After the passing of his father, Rabbi Shmuel, in 1882, he assumed the leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch. Famed for his phenomenal mind and analytical treatment of Chabad Chassidism, Rabbi Sholom DovBer wrote and delivered some 2,000 Maamarim (discourses of Chassidic teaching) over the 38 years of his leadership.

Rabbi Sholom DovBer passed away in Rostov, Russia on the 2nd of Nissan, 1920. His last words were: "I'm going to heaven; I leave you [my] writings."

Thursday, April 11, 2024-3 Nissan, 5784

Levites Inducted (1312 BCE)

Following the procedure G-d prescribed (*Numbers 8:5-22*), Moses inducted the Levites into Tabernacle service. The induction ceremony included sprinkling them with the ashes of the Red Heifer which was prepared the day beforehand.

Friday, April 12, 2024-4 Nissan, 5784

Hospital Convoy Ambushed (1948)

On the morning of the 4th of Nissan, a civilian convoy of doctors and nurses traveling to the Hadassah Hospital, on Jerusalem's Mount Scopus, was attacked by Arab forces. Of the ten vehicles in the caravan, five escaped. The other five vehicles, however, which included two buses and an ambulance, were riddled with machine gun fire and later set ablaze. Altogether, 77 Jewish civilians were massacred on that day. Shortly afterwards, the hospital was closed down and moved to the western part of Jerusalem. The Mt. Scopus hospital only reopened after the eastern part of Jerusalem was liberated by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War. Primarily staffed by Israeli doctors, it is the largest and best equipped hospital in the eastern section of Jerusalem.

Shabbat, April 13, 2024-5 Nissan, 5784

Spies to Jericho (1273 BCE)

Two days before the conclusion of the thirty-day mourning period following the passing of Moses on Adar 7 (see Jewish History for the 7th of Nissan), Joshua dispatched two scouts - Caleb and Pinchas - across the Jordan River to Jericho, to gather intelligence in preparation of the Israelites' battle with the first city in their conquest of the Holy Land. In Jericho, they were assisted and hidden by Rahab, a woman who lived inside the city walls.

Passing of Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshel of Apta (1825)

Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heshel was one of the leading Rebbes of his day, serving as rabbi and spiritual leader first in Apta (presently called Opatow), then in Iasi, and finally in Mezhibuzh. He was known for his great love of his fellow Jews and is commonly known as "the Ohev Yisroel [lover of Jews] of Apta."