

shifting mission of *tikkun olam* for which the Creator of the Universe redeemed us from bondage lies before us. Our highest and best purpose under the Avrahamic Covenant, you see, is not to eat sweet fruit and drink new wine under our Bridegroom's banner of love. That is wonderful – and serves a purpose in the Grand Plan. But it is by no means the goal of the Plan. The glorious adventure to which we, like Avraham, have been called is much more than a journey of romance and self-discovery. We who have responded to the call to become functioning members of the Covenant Community are being prepared to become something much more significant than a beloved. We are being prepared to be *a bride*. But that is not the end of our calling – it is just the beginning. We are not just being prepared for a glorious wedding day, a delicious honeymoon, and a happily-ever-after life in a castle somewhere far away from the madding crowd. Our calling in the Covenant goes deeper than that. We are also being prepared to serve as the Holy One's co-regent and highest level ambassador on earth. We are being prepared to represent Him, to model – and teach - His ways, and to reign alongside of Him. But this is also not just a convenient marriage of state either. The ultimate purpose for which we are being prepared is to conceive, to carry to term, to give birth to, and to nurture to maturity the Holy One's seed. As Sarah did with Avraham's seed, so are we to do with the Holy One's seed. Like the young Hebrew maiden Miryam of Natzret, c. 4 BCE, we have each, individually and collectively, been chosen to receive, embrace, and carry the seed of Messiah. We are all being prepared to proclaim, with all our heart, like Miryam: “*May it be unto your servant according to Your Word!*”

Getting a Feel for the Identity, Issues, and Situation of a ‘Tazria’

The Hebrew word *tazria*, spelled *tet, zayin, resh, ayin* means *to germinate a seed*. When a woman is pregnant the seed [Hebrew *zera*²] of mankind is germinating within her body. That gives her special spiritual status. She is *especially blessed*. That special spiritual status continues, according to our aliyah, for 40 days if the seed inside her womb is a male child, and for 80 days if the seed inside her womb is a female child. During that time some very important things happen both to her body and to the very vulnerable body, soul, and spirit of the child she has borne.

During the *tamei* period following giving birth a woman is therefore temporarily exempted from ordinary “community life” and social responsibilities. She has a *more important* spiritual status. And this is appropriate, for she has *partnered with the Holy One to bring new life – and new hope – into the world*. She needs to come to peace with it. The consequences for her, for her husband, and for the child she has born make coming to peace with her new role, and the effect this baby is going to have on her life, her first priority. She needs to have as few

² Spelled *zayin, resh, ayin, zera* is Strong's Hebrew word #2232. It is pronounced *zeh-raw'*

distractions – and possibilities for conflicting loyalties – as possible. In reality it is therefore the rest of the community that is actually *tamei* to the mother and to her newborn child. The community should not insist upon intruding upon her lofty spiritual condition, bringing the cares of the world back into her life, a single moment before the Holy One says she is ready.

Once There Was A Golden Calf Under Construction At This Mountain; Now A Pure, Holy, Tazria is Taking Shape Here Instead!

It is evident from a quick look at the camp that *something is vastly different about our camp – and us as individuals* - now compared to our early days at this mountain. First of all, there is the obvious. Sitting in the midst of our camp now is a very, very special three-dimensional structure that Torah calls the *Mish'kan*. And at the epicenter of that structure the Manifest Presence of the Creator of the Universe is resting, providing us with an awe-inspiring display of glory every day. The tabernacling of His Glory among us has *changed the spiritual climate* dramatically. As long as His Glory shines, and as long as the supernatural fire on the *mizbeach* [altar] in the courtyard of the *Mish'kan* burns, we know our God is with us. He is lifting us up to *a higher level of spiritual reality* than normal human existence.

And that introduces the second, even more radical element of transformation. As we gaze in childlike wonder at the beautiful mysteries of *Sefer Vayikra* [the book of Leviticus] we are in the process of being transported by our Bridegroom-King into a much deeper dimension of holiness than we have ever known. We realize we are walking in the shadow of the Messiah. And in this new higher dimension of holiness into which we now find ourselves transported, and which is by no means the natural environment of Fallen Men, we have learned that *the instructions of Torah are our only lifeline*, and that we must not depart from those instructions to the left or to the right.

We now know that we must not go our own way and do what seems right or 'spiritual' in our own eyes, as did Nadav and Avihu. We are beginning to understand that everything we think, say, feel, or do in this realm absolutely must be a *sh'ma*-response to the life-giving instructions of the Holy One. In this realm *only a complete fool would try to impress either the Holy One or men with showy acts of piety*. And our entire approach to life and worship - and indeed all things both physical and spiritual – needs to *radically change*.

Let the Radical Changes We Need So Desperately Come!

As this week's studies begin we find ourselves in the *midst* of our Divine Bridegroom's prescribed makeover protocol. There are *eight distinct phases* of this process, each of which is uniquely designed to chip away from us absolutely

everything that is un-becoming a Bride. We are now in the second of the Make Over phases. As you will recall, however, our Beloved began the radical procedure by leading us through five connected *pathways of intimacy*. He designed each of these pathways in such a way as to bring us into a series intimate encounters with Him at the Brazen Altar. These ‘five connecting pathways of intimacy’ together constituted the introductory, absolute beginner level *first phase* of the Divine Make-Over. Each of the five connecting pathways of intimacy our Bridegroom walked us down brought about a radical cutting away of some factor that stands in the way of the pure, fully-surrendered Bridal love which our Divine Bridegroom deserves – *i.e.* the love of the Holy One with *all our hearts*, with *all our souls*, and with *all our strength*. The *korban olah* pathway³ was designed to rid us of our tendency toward self-will, self-interest, and self-determination. The *korban minchah* pathway⁴ was designed to rid us of our tendency toward materialism, selfish hoarding, and pride. The *korban shelem* pathway⁵ was designed to rid us of our tendency to be critical, judgmental, and defensive toward and to take offenses and hold grudges against our fellow man. The *korban chata’at* pathway⁶ was designed to cleanse us of our tendency to wander from our Bridegroom’s Ways out of inattentiveness, unbridled lust, greed, or curiosity, or rebellion. The *korban asham* pathway⁷ was designed to rid us of our tendency to respond to our own sin by embracing burdens of guilt, shame, false humility, and feelings of worthlessness.

Then beginning in the middle of last week’s parsha the Holy One took the makeover procedure to a *new and deeper phase*. That is when He began training us that it is by no means enough for us to merely have a radical, vibrant *altar life*. We have discovered that He does not want His Bride to know Him only – or even primarily - through laying things that hinder love down at the brazen altar. He instead calls His Bride to know Him intimately at *all levels* and in *all phases* of life. He desires for us to function in Bridal response to Him not only in regard to

³ *Korban olah*, literally meaning *to approach in order to ascend*, is the Hebrew phrase our English Bibles often translate as ‘burnt offering’. For a thorough discussion of this pathway, see Monday’s Study for parsha #24, *Vaykira*.

⁴ *Korban minchah*, literally meaning *to approach with produce*, is the Hebrew phrase our English Bibles often translate as ‘meat offering’ or ‘grain offering’. For a thorough discussion of this pathway, see Tuesday’s Study for parsha *Vaykira*.

⁵ *Korban shelem*, literally meaning *to approach as a peacemaker*, is the Hebrew phrase our English Bibles often translate as ‘fellowship offering’. For a thorough discussion of this pathway, see Wednesday’s Study for parsha *Vaykira*.

⁶ *Korban chata’at* literally meaning *to approach for sin covering*, is the Hebrew phrase our English Bibles often translate as ‘sin offering’ or ‘trespass offering’. For a thorough discussion of this pathway, see Thursday’s Study for parsha *Vaykira*.

⁷ *Korban asham*, literally meaning *to approach in order to cover shame*, is the Hebrew phrase our English Bibles often translate as ‘guilt offering’. For a thorough discussion of this pathway, see Friday’s Study for parsha *Vaykira*.

public acts of worship, but also in connection with our most private moments of ordinary life.

The first thing He began to teach us in regard to this *beyond-the-altar* aspect of our calling was to learn how to both *distinguish* and *walk a fine line* between **two** spiritual states that affect all of life – *i.e.* the spiritual state He calls ‘*tahor*’, which He expects to become the ‘natural’ state of all who desire intimate communion with Him, and the spiritual state He calls ‘*tamei*’, which represents the opposite and *unready-for-love* state. *Tamei*, as we discovered, means *compromised, defiled, torn or fragmented in devotion, temporarily [at least] distracted by that which is temporal and therefore in the process of passing away, and unhealthy to be around*. *Tahor*, on the other hand, means *pure, whole, healthy to be around, and focused wholeheartedly upon that which leads to life and coming into fullness*. Which of these two statuses do you think best exemplifies the Divine Bridegroom’s plan and vision for His Bride?

P’ru U’rvu – the Kingdom Way

Do you remember the first blessing the Holy One spoke over mankind? It was ***p’ru v’urvu*** [*be fruitful, and multiply*]⁸? Remember Adam ‘knowing’ his wife - resulting in Chava giving birth to Kayin, Hevel, and Shet? Remember 90-year-old Sarah getting pregnant and giving birth to Yitzchak? Remember Rivkah doing the same and bringing forth Ya’akov and Esav? Remember the Torah telling us the amazing and unique birthing stories of Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah, Tamar, and Elisheva? Torah has a whole lot to say, it seems, about *marrying, begetting, bearing, and birthing*. The Holy One apparently wants us to be different from the animals – whose relationships and reproductive escapades He hardly mentions.

In the animal kingdom, you see, species reproduction is a purely physical, almost violent phenomenon. It is all about instinct, availability, primal urge, and brute force. It is all about domination, not endearment. It is all about aggression, bereft of affection. It is all about convenience, devoid of commitment. It is all about taking, never giving. It is just biology – survival of the fittest - as the pseudo-intellectuals of our age like to call it. Those engaging in the process might as well be reproducing widgets – and, indeed, this kind of process is now even replicated in test tubes. No muss, no fuss, no pleasure, no pain. With human beings, into Whom is the Creator’s own neshama has been breathed - it is supposed to be very, very different. We are supposed to model a ‘more excellent way’. While, with humans, every story is different, and beautiful in its own right, the stories frequently contain many, if not all, the following elements:

⁸ Genesis 1:28 [in relation to Adam], 9:1 and 9:7 [in relation to Noah’s sons], and 35:11 [specifically in relation to Ya’akov].

*Attraction. Affection. Choice.
Pursuit. Conversation. Commitment.
Coming Together. Vulnerability. Surrender.*

*Conception. Gestation. Chemical changes.
Bodily transformation. Priority reshuffling. Relational maturation.*

*Emotions. Excitement. Exhilaration.
Mood swings. Embarrassment. Regret. Resentment. Revulsion. Guilt. Shame.
Anxiety. Nausea. Discomfort. Overwhelm.*

Resignation. Acclimation. Preparation. Anticipation.

*Waterpouring. Contractions. Heavy Breathing.
Dilation. Effacement. Descent. Crowning.
Burning sensation. Stretching sensation. Panic.*

*Urge to push. Push ... Primal scream ... Birth.
Blood. Cord. Placenta. Outcry.*

*New life emerging. New hope arising. New beginning unfolding.
Staring. Inspecting. Seeing. Hearing. Touching.
Laughter. Tears. Embracing. Nurturing. Bonding.*

*Promising. Cooing. Humming lullabies.
Delight. Endearment. Enjoyment.*

*Re connecting with the Beauty of Creation- and the goodness of the Creator.
Feeling Grateful. Humbly Giving thanks. Selah!*

Keep moving folks – nothing to see here. It’s just human beings, being fruitful and multiplying ... the way they were created to do. Do not try this in a test tube. This is much, much more than biology. This is mankind at its best, and spirituality at its finest. Every human pregnancy, you see, is an epic adventure. Every birth is a bona fide miracle. And every child is a *zachor* – a remembrance of the Promise that one day a *Seed of Woman* will crush the head of the serpent.

***We Are All The Tazria of Leviticus 12.
We Have all Conceived; But Who, and From What Realm,
is the Father of the Seed that is Growing In Us?***

The greatest promise the Holy One made to Avraham was not land. Nor was it wealth. Nor was it even the Holy One’s deep affection or unshakable *with-ness*. The greatest, and ultimate, promise the Holy One made to Avraham was that He would bear SEED. The Covenant is about producing holy offspring – reproducing

over and over again, and spreading throughout the world, the life force of the Holy One Himself. This is what the Words of the Holy One are. As Messiah taught, the seed is the Word of the Holy One. The *neshamah* the Holy One has breathed into us has formed multiple wombs. The Words He speaks are the *zerah*, or seed. We are all the *tazria*. Our purpose is to receive the Words, and let them grow and mature in real time in the wombs the *neshama* has formed. As we *sh'ma* His Words, conception occurs - and the Holy One's life force begins to take shape within us. As the growth occurs, it changes us radically – from the inside out. We are being transformed in every way possible - from the top of our heads to the soles of our feet, and from the thoughts of our minds to the appetites of our bodies, to the priorities of our souls, to the desires of our hearts.

Ever since our Bridegroom-King called us out of darkness into His glorious light, therefore, what has He been doing? He has been releasing His Word over – and into – us. He has been meticulously, strategically, skillfully using carefully crafted Words of Divine Speech like laser scalpels. He is using these Words, which are sharper than any two-edged sword, to debride the wounds in our flesh, to cauterize and repair the wounds of our heart, to rewire our dumbed-down minds, and to restore our wills, minds, and emotions to their original purpose. He has now done some of His glorious brand of surgery on every part of who we thought we were. But what He is out to do is not just to heal us. He is out to prepare us to reproduce His life force in real time, in real situations, in the midst of real challenges, in the context of real relationships, on a very real planet earth. His Words have therefore not only brought His healing virtue into our hearts, souls, and bodies; they have carried the essential attributes and characteristics of His own life force into our innermost being. His Words have implanted themselves in the walls of our wombs. They are now working night and day, in tandem with the *neshamah* the Holy One breathed into mankind at the time of Creation [Genesis 2:7], to recombine our DNA – and prepare us to reproduce. This is happening in each of us individually. It is also destined to happen in all of us collectively. We have, you see, all been called to become a *tazria veyaldah zachar* - one who conceives and brings forth a male child as a remembrance.

If, as, when, and to the extent we surrender to and cooperate with the protocols and the process, the sheer energy of the new life force at work within us will bring about a transformation that will send shock waves throughout Creation. And what the Holy One plans for the world to see is not us – it is to be One Whose seed we are now carrying. What the world will see will be none other than the Messiah – the Living Embodiment of the Spoken Words of the Creator of the Universe.

Whether in our natural flesh state of origin we were born male, or whether we

were born female, it does not matter⁹. We are still called to *aman* [i.e. to become pregnant, carry to term, give birth to, and nurture] the Holy One's Seed. The Seed we are to bear is spiritual seed. It is the very Word of the Creator of the Universe. Our ultimate mission is to *reproduce and release into the earth the Living Word we have received from the One Who Redeemed us from bondage* - in real time, in real ways, in real life.

Learning to Distinguish Between the Tamei and the Tahor

Near the end of parsha Sh'mini we discussed how certain interactions with animals that the Holy One considers *tamei* for us actually communicate their *tamei* status to us. The first area of interaction that we found could affect our walk along the fine line between *tamei* and *tahor* had to do with one of the most basic facets of this temporal life – i.e. the receiving of nourishment through the act of eating. The Holy One told us plainly that if we make meals of things that were designed as Creation's garbage-disposals [i.e. the flesh of pigs, vermin, shellfish, catfish, cockroaches, flies, carnivorous beasts, and birds of prey, for instance], we actually take on their *tamei* status. It gave a whole new focus to the old phrase 'You are what you eat!', didn't it.

At the end of last week's parsha however we learned that it is not just the act of ingesting the flesh of *tamei* creatures in place of the things He has designed as our Bride-food against which we are called to be on the alert. We are also called to let those creatures do what *they do*, while we do what *we are called to do*. *Tahor* people – people who are *pure, whole, and focused on that which leads to life and fullness* - have plenty to keep them occupied and functioning at a high state of Bride-like effectiveness.

The Holy One seems to think that His *sh'ma*-people have no business keeping company with – much less messing with the carcasses of or wearing as garments the skins of – things He designed to function as Creation's garbage disposals. Those things serve purposes in the Fallen state of Creation, but close association of those things with His Bride-People is not part of – and is indeed potentially disruptive of - the Plan.

It appears our Bridegroom does not think it Bride-like for us to go dumpster diving in the waste receptacles of Creation which reek of death, refuse, and filth. Wow! The Holy One is getting *downright personal*, isn't He. I hear some of you out there asking "What does He care what we *stuff in our mouths*, or what critters we *cozy up with* and/or *wear on our bodies as fashion statements*, or, for that matter, what animal carcasses we *smell like*?" I expect some out there are

⁹ In the spiritual realm of the Kingdom of Heaven there is no male or female.

muttering: “*Who does He think He is – our Bridegroom or something?*”

Uhhhh ... well ... YES, my friends - that is EXACTLY Who He thinks He is! And so I have a few quick questions to ask all you husbands and wives out there. Do you not care what your spouse’s breath smells like when you are dancing cheek-to-cheek? Do you not care what critters he/she brings along to your special anniversary retreat with you? Do you care if he/she smells like a pig or shrimp when the time comes for intimate communion between the two of you? Of course you do. How insulting it is to a spouse to approach special moments together without making the slightest effort to prepare yourself to dress, look, smell, speak and act like a fitting companion for the one who loves you most. And *how utterly un-Bride-like* is the person who claims to have surrendered his/her self-will, creativity, pride, relationships, sin patterns, and shame to his/her Divine Bridegroom at the altar yet ignores the Bridegroom’s instructions as to the basic activities of daily life. If He is not Lord *of your table* and Lord *of your closet*, how can you possibly proclaim – much less how could anyone possibly believe - that He is Lord of your life in any real and meaningful way?

Being *tamei* by reason of contact with *tamei creatures* does not mean you are eternally damned or condemned to Hell. It is not about the afterlife at all. It is about your purpose and destiny here on earth. All becoming recognized as *tamei* because of contact with *tamei* creatures means is that you *have some Kingdom business to attend to* before you are supposed to go to the altar to have intimate communion with your Divine Bridegroom.

Basically all the Holy One has said thus far regarding the *tamei* status is that if you insist on choosing to *eat a diet of garbage* instead of feasting at the banquet He has spread for you, and if you insist on *wearing a wardrobe of predator skins* instead of the glorious trousseau He has designed for His Bride, and if you *reek of the putrid stench of rebellion* instead of emitting the fragrance He has bought for you at a great price, well ... *forgive Him if He doesn’t get excited about you coming around His altar going through the outward motions of love and pretending you are there for an intimate encounter* when you have proven that your appetite, your tastes, your sense of identity, and therefore your heart, are somewhere else!

Think about it. How could one who stubbornly refuses to eat only what He says to eat seriously make *korban olah* declaring the *death of all self-will*, anyway? How could one who deliberately chooses to consort with creatures He has said are garbage disposals possibly expect to make *korban minchah*, declaring that all physical appetites and tastes for the things of this world are surrendered to Him? He really does not want you to go through motions of religion. He wants your

heart. And He is willing to wait *until you are really ready to give it to Him*. No, He won't relent until He has it all.

The Process of Conceiving, Bearing, and Introducing to the World the Seed of the Avrahamic Covenant

Tazria will continue the focus begun last week regarding the distinction between those aspects of the Holy One's creation that are *tahor* for us on the one hand and those aspects of the Holy One's creation which are *tamei* for us on the other hand. This week the Holy One will take the *Sh'mini* revelation one step further however by making it clear that there are a number of things and circumstances we can expect to encounter in the course of our lives which will constitute *tamei/tahor* portals which actually place us in far more need for enhanced vigilance than do the *tamei* animals. He is going to address the areas of life in which *we become the most conflicted, the most torn between loyalties*. It is the season to reconsider the physical, emotional, and, yes, *spiritual implications*, of sexuality, lovemaking, pregnancy, and childbirth - not to mention welcoming a new human life into the family, to the world, to the Covenant, and to the Grand Redemptive Plan of our Bridegroom-King. In relation to these critical issues of life, are you lining up on the Kingdom side of the balance - or on the unclean, profane, and destructive side?

The first area our Bridegroom-King will address will be the process of conceiving and bearing children. No one, after all, is more conflicted than the mother of a newborn who demands her attention, her affection, her time, and her focus. Suddenly the woman's husband - and potentially the Holy One - are lower on the priority list than the baby in the womb or in the crib or playpen. The Holy One understands this - indeed, He understands what goes on in a woman, her heart, and her relationships and priorities when she is pregnant or a new mother better than anyone else - including the woman herself.

The Holy One *designed* the woman. Not only that, He has been the birth coach of every woman from Chava to Hagar to Sarah to Rivkah to Leah to Rachel to Bilhah to Zilpah to Chanah to the wife of Manoah to Bat-sheva to Elisheva [Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist] to Miryam [Mary, mother of Yeshua] to my mother and yours and so on throughout this thing we call 'time'. He knows the hormonal changes that will take place in the pregnant and nursing woman. He knows the emotional shifts and mood swings these hormonal changes will engender. He knows how tender and vulnerable both the woman and the growing child will be from the instant of conception.

The Holy One knows full well that babies in the womb and at the breast very

much need their mother's time, attention, affection and focus a whole lot more than their parents need to be *making korban* at the brazen altar. And the Holy One knows pregnant women and mothers of newborns need time away from social and religious activities to 'bond' with their babies. He knows that there is no way the mother of a newborn can in the first few days of her baby's life totally surrender all her heart and relations with other people to Him at the level the *korbanot* of intimacy call upon approaching worshippers to do. So the Holy One says basically 'Look - *I can wait*' to have intimate altar communion with new mothers and mothers-to-be – whether at the brazen altar of the physical *Mish'kan*, in the world of communal fellowship, and even in the inwards parts where the Ruach indwells the follower of Messiah. He thereby takes the weight of conflicting loyalties completely off the new mother or mother-to-be's shoulders by declaring her *tamei*, and thus excusing her from formal activities of altar life for an appropriate season.

While we are on the subject of human reproduction, however, let us consider the spiritual ramifications of the process – shall we? Have you ever wondered *what if Adam and Chava had not listened to the Serpent and had not partaken of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?* Have you ever wondered *what human reproduction would have been like then?* After all, we know human reproduction was part of God's plan all along, because in Genesis 1:28 the Holy One blessed the first human being by prophetically empowering him to:

P'ru ur'vu umil'u et ha-aretz v'chiveishuha
Be fruitful and multiply; and fill the land and conquer it.

At that time the Holy One did not stop to discuss the specific mechanics of how He contemplated the man He had created in His image to go about 'being fruitful' or 'multiplying'. Since woman had not at that point even been created as a separate entity however it seems pretty clear that the rules of human reproduction *as we know them* were not yet in force. How then was Adam originally designed to 'multiply'? We are not told. The next we hear about human reproduction is *after Adam and Chava* fell into sin. It is in the course of describing the consequences of the sin for the original couple and their descendants that the Holy One announced to Chava the form of human reproduction we all have come to know. He said to her:

Ha-r'bah ar'beh yitzbonech v'heronech
The greater, the greater will be your anguish related to childbearing

b'etzev teldi v'nim
in anguish will you give birth to children
[Genesis 3:16]

Everything we know of human reproduction is the 'after the Fall' process

described in Genesis 3:16. And each time that process is repeated we are therefore *reminded of Adam and Chava's sin*. Because of their sin the most joyous and exciting of events – bringing forth children – has become one of the most painful and potentially life-threatening aspects of life as well. In light of Genesis 3:16, you see, every time a woman's ovaries produce an ovum, whether she knows it or not she enters *a portal between spiritual worlds - a crossroads of life and death*.

If the woman's ovum goes unfertilized what happens is that the woman's uterus sheds the lining it prepared to nurture an embryo, and issues forth a strong flow of blood designed to wash the egg away before it decays and causes disease. The resulting discharge of blood makes the woman what Torah calls a *niddah*. Throughout the course of the unfertilized egg's being flushed away that puts her in a state the Holy One deems *tamei*. While losing blood from this process, she is excused from participation in community altar life, and is given some 'private time' to cope with the situation. That will be discussed in some detail in a later aliyah. Today's aliyah however deals with what happens if the egg the woman produces actually *gets fertilized* such that the Genesis 3:16 process 'kicks in' and starts to 'take over'. The Holy One declares that the process of birthing a child is one of the things which brings a woman into what He wants us all to recognize is a *tamei* state. As Torah puts it:

... ishah ki tazria v'yaldah zachar

... When a woman produces seed and gives birth to a boy,

V'tame'ah shiv'at yamim

she will be tamei for seven days

kimei nidat devotah titma

just as she is tamei during the time of separation when she has her period.

[Leviticus 12:2]

Please note the peculiar way in which Torah refers to the conception and birth to which it is directing our attention. It says specifically '*when a woman produces seed ...*' Usually when discussing the reproductive process Torah refers to the *seed of the man*, not the woman. Could it be that the forsaking of any reference to the participation of a male human in the procreation process and the use instead of the cryptic phrase *ishah ki tazria* [literally, when a woman produces seed] to describe the reproductive process in the case in question carries a hidden message.

While all human reproduction within the covenant community is embraced within the *mitzvah*, the ultimate conception and birth Torah is talking about in its most literal sense is the 'seed of woman' prophesied in Genesis 3:15 – the one who will crush the head of the Serpent even as the Serpent bruises His Heel.

A Close Encounter of the Garden Kind

In the course of producing an egg, hosting the union of egg of woman and seed of man, nurturing the resulting new life form *in utero*, and then giving birth a la Genesis 3:16, a woman encounters a *spiritual* portal which can lead in one of two directions. It can lead her to the world of darkness and death and depression [like the lady in Houston a few years ago who drowned her five children in a state of post-partum depression] - *or* it can propel her into a world of deeper commitment to, and more intimate relationship with, the Holy One.

This critical crossroads should not be approached as ‘business as usual’. A new level of experiencing the Holy One has become essential for her – so that she can nurture and train the child she has borne the way the Holy One intends. Thus every woman who conceives and bears a child has in the eyes of Torah entered a ‘danger zone’. She has experienced what I like to call a ‘*close encounter of the Garden kind*’. You see, Dear Reader, pregnancy and childbearing have been made *tamei* by what happened in the Garden. That is, after all, where the *tamei* creature [the Serpent] touched and left its mark on the process. Contact with the process now therefore transmits the *tamei* status to the woman.

This does not mean that getting pregnant or giving birth is a sin. Nor does it mean that a pregnant woman is in any way *cut-off* from fellowship with the Holy One through prayer, through meditation, or in any place other than the *public altar*. She can pray. She can meditate. She can study. But she is temporarily excused from bringing *korbanot* to the brazen altar. She is temporarily excused, as her conflicted loyalties would make it difficult to do, from declaring that her relationship with the Holy One is even *at that time* the true focus of her life.

The Holy One knows – and we should all know as well – the during the period of time immediately following childbirth the true focus of a woman’s life is – and should be – the baby to which she has given birth. The Holy One understands that. And He wants her – and everyone else – to know that is *exactly the way it should be*. The most Bride-like thing in the world the mother of a newborn can do is devote her full attention to taking care of the miracle the Holy One has placed in her care. *Korbanot* can wait – for an appointed season at least. The woman is called apart for a special purpose of nurturing a new life in the image of the Creator, and should not therefore either desire to or be expected to just go on doing what she did before. Her participation in the Genesis 3:15 process means she needs *a new and deeper level of relationship with the Holy One* to navigate the journey. She needs this for the sake of her child, for the sake of her mate, for her own sake, and for the sake of the species called ‘man’. She is, in connection with her pregnancy, called by the Holy One to a state of extreme vigilance.

The critical word in the last sentence is the word *CALLED*. Remember, *Vayikra* [the Hebrew name for the book we call Leviticus] means “**and He called**”. Remember that the *calling* of the Holy One to human beings is essence of the book we are reading. The state of *tamei* does not therefore mean “*stay away*” as you may have been taught – it means “*I am calling you - come closer!*” Think about it - the birth of a baby. The miracle of new life, held in one’s arms. No words can describe the effect the event of birth has upon the mother and father. Their lives are forever changed. What experience can compare? Indeed, the event of birth is said to be the closest one can get to the Garden of Eden in this life. Why? Every time a child is born it is a remembrance of the blessing of the Holy One in the garden, when He spoke over His most treasured creation ***Be fruitful, and multiply***. And while it is also a remembrance of what the Holy One told Chava after the Fall: ***I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children***. [Genesis 3:16], even more is it a remembrance of the promise the Holy One made that of the seed of woman, one would come who would crush the head of the serpent [Genesis 3:15].

Of course, the event of birth is also as close as one can get in this life to experiencing the Avrahamic covenant firsthand – for the Holy One’s main promise to the old childless one was that He would give him offspring – offspring as numerous as the sand of the sea, and as the stars of the night sky. Each child is therefore a *remembrance*.

The Special Korbanot Protocol for Women and Their Newborns

The sojourn of a woman into the realm of Genesis 3:16 human reproduction places her in a special state of need for making an approach to the Holy One however *as soon as the Divinely-appointed number of days after childbirth have elapsed*. The Holy One continues to exercise vigilance over such a woman – and the life she has conceived – at the same time calling both of them to come near to Him in a different way, and at a different level, than either has experienced before.

After the assigned number of days after childbirth has elapsed the woman is directed to come to the entrance of the Mish’kan and present to the kohen two things:

1. for making *korban olah* [total dedication], a yearling sheep, and
2. for making *korban chata’t* [sin placed under the covenant] a young dove or turtledove.

Torah specifically says that the purposes for which she is to make *korbanot olah* and *chata’t* in such at such a special time is to [a] “*cleanse her of the blood*

coming from her womb”, [b] “to make atonement for her”, and [c] in order that she be returned to *tahor* status. **Leviticus 12:6, 8.**

Children as “Remembrances”

The idea that a baby is a “remembrance” of the Garden of Eden, of the Fall of man, and of the Avrahamic covenant, is embodied in the Hebrew word Torah uses to describe a “male child” in the passage we are studying. That word Torah chooses for such purpose is not *ben*, which means *son*, but is instead *zakar*¹⁰. This latter word is a masculine noun, translated as: male (67 times), man (7 times), child (4 times), mankind (2 times), and him (1 time). *Zakar* is derived from the primitive Hebrew verb root meaning *to remember, to recall, to call to mind, to mention, to record, to make a memorial*. Hence Torah is telling us that *every male child is set as a “remembrance” – a remembrance of the promise – of Genesis 3 – the “seed of woman”*.

What about a female child – a little girl? The Hebrew word translated as girl child in the passage we are studying is not *bat*, meaning daughter. Instead Torah uses the term *neqebah*¹¹. This feminine Hebrew noun means simply female. It is derived from the verb *naqab*¹², which means *to pierce, to perforate, or to hollow out*. It relates to the special purpose of woman to provide a place for the receipt, germination, and safekeeping of the seed of mankind, in order that mankind may “*be fruitful and multiply*.” It also gives some perspective on the statement of Simeon concerning Miryam, mother of Yeshua, when he said: *And a sword shall pierce* [Hebrew *neqab*] *your own soul, too.*” **Luke 2:35.**

The “Separation” Aspect of Post-Birth Tamei Status

Our society absolutely hates the idea of separating a woman who has given birth from communal interaction for 40 or 80 days. It tells us that such a separation is a *discrimination against and punishment of* the woman. Do you believe that was the Holy One’s intention? Do you believe that is the Holy One’s way? Or is it possible that instead it is a Godless and insanely jealous *society* who seeks to punish the woman – to force her to abandon her special spiritual status and return to “ordinary” life before her time?

Is it possible that the special plans for good the Holy One has for a woman who has carried the seed of mankind make the lure and attraction of “society” and “communal interaction” pale in comparison, and reveal the shallowness of society, and the superiority of the Holy One’s Way? Is it possible that *the Holy One knows best*? Is it possible that when in the proper time a woman returns to society, she

¹⁰ *Zakar* is *zayin, kof, resh*. Strong’s Hebrew word #2145, it is pronounced *zaw-kawr’*.

¹¹ *Neqebah* is *nun, kuf, beit, hey*. Strong’s Hebrew word #5347, it is pronounced *nek-ay-baw’*.

¹² *Naqab* is *nun, qof, beit*. Strong’s Hebrew word # 5344, it is pronounced *naw-kab’*.

may bring with her much more spiritual insight and wisdom than university professors and best-selling authors? It is only possible if we view pregnancy and childbirth as a “close encounter of the Garden kind” – a “remembrance”.

Precious In the Sight of the Holy One

The related “remembrance” processes of conception and childbirth are predictably and demonstrably *very significant to the Holy One*. He has chosen to be deeply involved in both processes. Why? Why does He not just let human beings do the “birds and the bees” thing? Because conception and birth of a human being – unlike that of an animal – involves the creation of a new *nefesh* [living soul, possessing (or at the very least potentially possessing) the Ruach of the Holy One].

Human conception and childbirth are not “business as usual”. Women experiencing such things enter into a special spiritual state – a state calling for an enhanced level of *sh'ma-ing* [tuning in to, focusing upon, listening for, listening carefully to, hearing, heeding, following, and treasuring] the Holy One’s Voice. The Holy One’s voice is a *healing* and *nurturing* force that a woman *with child* – and the new life that she carries within her - desperately need. Their need is immediate and overwhelming. Other details of life should simply be placed on hold. Social life - and public religious observance - can wait. The child, the marriage, *cannot*. You see, Dear Reader, contrary to pagan teachings prevalent in modern approaches to sociology, it does not “take a village to raise a child”. What it takes instead is a Godly man and woman who have had a close encounter of the Garden kind, have walked through the experience hand in Hand with the Holy One, and have, through heeding His instructions through it all, drawn closer to the Holy One than ever before.

Brit Milah [Circumcision]

If the woman gives birth to a male child, the covenant the Holy One made with Avraham, the Holy One has instructed us that the child’s foreskin is to be removed on *yom ha-sh’mini* - the eighth day – of life.

Uv’yom ha-sh’mini yimol besar orlato

On the eighth day the flesh of the foreskin is to be pruned.

[Leviticus 12:3]

Brit milah - the covenant-sealing act of male circumcision - is not mentioned in Torah until the time of Avraham. According to Torah, when Avraham was 99 years old the Holy One appeared to him and instructed him to circumcise himself, his son, *Yish’mael* [Ishmael], all the males of his household and all his slaves. The sages have stated that Avraham followed this instruction of the Holy One on the tenth day of the month of *Tishrei*, which the Holy One later designated as *Yom Kippur* – the day on which atonement was made for the sins of the people. The

following year, when *Yitschak* [Isaac] was born, Avraham circumcised him on the eighth day [*yom ha-sh'mini*]¹³ of his life, establishing the pattern for all generations.

That was approximately 3700 years ago. Over the years since, circumcision, as the special 'sign' of the Avrahamic covenant, has always been either fiercely attacked – or misused - by those who do not know Torah. When the Syrian-Greeks under Antiochus IV persecuted the Jews of Judah in the second Century BCE, they made it a crime punishable by death to perform "*Brit Milah*". Tradition records that when many fathers, out of fear for their lives, neglected to circumcise their sons, the mothers arose and courageously performed this "mitzvah". If the Syrian-Greeks found out about this, they would kill the circumcised child and tie its lifeless body around the mother's neck, parade her through the streets, then throw her off the highest ridge they could find. This was, of course, one of the many incitements for the Maccabean revolt.

The Holy One instituted *brit milah* as the sign of His covenant with Avraham Avinu. Since He promised Avraham seed, and made good on His promise, He had the right to tell Avraham how to consecrate the sons born of that seed. The power of the Covenant was not in the circumcision; it was in the total consecration of which the cutting testified. By cutting off the foreskin of every male child of the Covenant on the 8th day - the day of Messiah – a Hebrew father commits to be faithful to trim away the excess flesh from his son year after year, all the days of his youth. The Holy One's Plan of Redemption involves fully committed, fully flesh-surrendered and flesh-trimmed sons of the Covenant. The world does not need our flesh. It does not need a flesh-covered heart, flesh-covered ears, or flesh-indulgent organs and processes of reproduction.

The Torah therefore introduces the mitzvah of *brit milah* as part of Avraham's epic story of Covenant lifestyle. The Holy One broached the subject with His protégé in the following manner:

*When Avram was ninety-nine years old, the Holy One –
the Compassionate One - appeared to Avram and said to him,
I am the All Sufficient One; walk before me and become whole.
[Genesis 17:1]*

Did you catch that? The Holy One actually associates *b'rit milah* with the realm of wholeness – the realm where He desires for man to dwell. Note, however, that

¹³ Commentators have put various explanations forth as to why the Holy One chose the 8th day for a man to circumcise his son. Classical medical studies have found coagulating factors to be at peak around this time of life, leading to the reasoning that there is a 'health' reason for the choice of the eighth day. Others have suggested that, since one *Shabbat* must pass between birth and the eighth day, the Holy One wanted to provide the child with spiritual strength from his first Sabbath.

the Holy One does not suggest that *brit milah* brings about wholeness. It is, of course, the *other way around* – wholeness, which involves total submission and surrender to the Will and Ways of the Holy One - brings about *brit milah*. *Brit milah* is not a prerequisite to *shalom* with the Holy One – it is a natural consequence of that *shalom*.

In the Divine conversation with our father Avraham, the Holy One goes on to say regarding *brit milah*:

***This is My covenant which you are to keep
between Me and you and your descendants after you:
every male among you is to be circumcised.
You are to circumcise the flesh of your foreskin,
and that will be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.
At the age of eight days every male among you is to be circumcised ...***
[Genesis 17:9-12]

The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as *foreskin* is *orla*. When this word is used in the Bible, it usually refers to a restriction or blockage that prevents a person from using an object for the purpose it was created for. The fruit a tree produces in its first three years of productivity is called "*orla*", and we are restricted from eating it. **Leviticus 19:23**. Likewise an ear that is blocked is called an ear of "*orla*". **Jeremiah 6:10**. And a heart that is blocked by sin so as to be unable to feel what it was created to feel is called a heart of "*orla*" - an *uncircumcised heart*. **Ezekiel 44:9**. You can perhaps now see a little bit about what circumcision has to do with the state of wholeness that the Holy One desires for His people. And lest someone say the removing the *orla* is unimportant, the Holy One warns:

***An uncircumcised male who will not circumcise the flesh of his foreskin –
his soul shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My Covenant***
[Genesis 17:14]

Every time you see or hear of the circumcision of the male foreskin, therefore, Dear Reader, think of the taming, according to Covenant protocol, of ‘the flesh’. The father who circumcises his son’s foreskin on the 8th day of life, as the Torah instructs, also commits to patiently co-labor with the Holy One to trim off all excess flesh that tries to grow on his son throughout his youth. Each time the flesh of the young man arises, for the sake of the Covenant – and the needs of Creation for true sons of Elohim to arise and walk upon the earth – the father commits to do whatever is necessary to trim that flesh way, and keep it trimmed away, such that all that his son presents to and releases in the world is the Ruach of Elohim, the Word of Elohim, and the Blessing of the Covenant of Avraham.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Begin this week's study with the following general questions.

[A] What is the name of this week's first Torah parsha?

[B] What does that name mean in English?

2. Today's aliyah has to do with what is to occur upon the birth of a child. First, it discusses the length of time the mother is to be "*tamei*" - which means, among other things, that she is exempt from going to the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle] to make *korbanot*. Then it tells when a baby boy is to be circumcised, and prescribes a *korban olah* and a *korban chata't* to be 'brought near' by the parents at the end of the period of purification from blood.

This effectively means that there are two separate periods of special status for a woman who gives birth to a male child – a seven day period right after birth, when all communal interaction is suspended, and a thirty three day period commencing after the circumcision of the boy, when the woman and baby can receive visitors, but they are not to leave the home for societal reasons.

[A] What is the initial period of separation for a woman who has had a boy baby? A girl baby?

[B] On what day of its life is a boy baby to be circumcised?

[C] How many days is it after the boy is circumcised that the family is to present its *korban chata't* at the *Miqqedash/Ohel*?

[D] How many days is it after the initial period of separation after a girl baby is born that the family is to present its *korban chata't*?

[E] Why do you think the Holy One instructed the family to bring a *korban chata't* [an approach to Him to cleanse of/from a state of sinfulness] after a child was born? [Hint: don't forget that the birth of a child is a "remembrance" of the events of the garden!]

3. Our haftarah reading for *Tazria* comes from II Kings 4 and 5. In today's aliyah something is given to the prophet Elisha. With this gift Elisha participates in the Holy One's miraculous feeding of 100 men with 20 small barley loaves and a few fresh ears of barley grain. This event is significant, as it provided the Biblical precedent for Yeshua's "feeding of the 5000". Here is the account of the miraculous feeding of the 100:

*There came a man from Ba'al-Shalishah,
and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits,
twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack.*

*He said, "Give to the people, that they may eat".
His servant said, "What, should I set this before a hundred men?"*

*But he [Elisha] said, "Give the people, that they may eat;
for thus says the Holy One: **They will eat, and will leave of it.**"*
*So he set it before them, and they ate, and left of it,
according to the word of the Holy One.*

[II Kings 4:42-44]

- [A] What was given to Elisha by the man from Baal-shalishah?
- [B] What specific things did the gift consist of?
- [C] What was miraculous about the feeding of the people with this?

4. The first reading from the apostolic writings this week is Luke 2:21-24. This describes what happened on the eighth day of Yeshua's life.

*When eight days were fulfilled for the circumcision of the child,
his name was called Yeshua,
which was given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

*When the days of their purification
according to the torah of Moshe were fulfilled,
they brought him up to Y'rushalayim to present him to the Holy One
(as it is written in the torah of the Holy One,
"Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Holy One"),
and to make korban [approach] according to that which is said
in the torah of the Holy One: **"A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."***

- [A] What was done to Yeshua on the eighth day after His birth, and why?
- [B] On what day of his life did Yeshua's mother and Joseph make approach to HaShem at the Temple through a *korban olah* and *korban chata't*?
- [C] Why did Miryam and Yosef offer a pair of doves instead of a year-old lamb?
- [D] If the "wise men" had already presented to Yeshua the gold, frankincense and myrrh by this time, would such a *korban* have been appropriate?
- [E] Why did Miryam and Yosef "present" Yeshua to the Holy One?

May you become adept at Hosting Royalty!

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Isaiah 7:14

*Therefore the Holy One Himself shall give you a sign;
Behold, an **almah** [Hebrew for young maiden,
possibly, but not necessarily, a virgin]
is going to conceive and bear a son,
and will call his name **Immanu-El.***