



31 March -
6 April, 2019
24 Adar II -
1 Nissan, 5779

First Torah:

Leviticus 12:1 - 13:59

**Second Torah - Rosh
Chodesh (New month):**

Numbers 28:9-15

**Third Torah -
Hachodesh:**

Exodus 12:1-20

Haftorah:

Ezekiel 45:18 - 46:15;

Isaiah 66:1;

Isaiah 66:23-24;

Isaiah 66:23

■ **FAMILY
PROGRAMS**

Do you have family on the outside who are struggling, please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

■ **GRAPE JUICE &
MATZAH**

Aleph offers free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll, it is available to all prisons.

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SPEAK NICELY AND CLEARLY

That the Torah speaks in refined language is a principle of Biblical studies. The classic example is back in the Book of Genesis. There, when G-d tells Noah to take all the animals into the Ark, He speaks of the “clean” animals (hatehorah) and the “animals which are not clean” (asher einenah tehorah). Although the Torah is generally sparing with words—every seemingly superfluous letter is expounded upon and interpreted by the Sages—here it uses an additional eight (Hebrew) letters to avoid using the word teme’ah (literally, “defiled” or “impure”).

By doing this the Torah teaches us that we should never allow a shameful expression to pass our lips. When the Torah deliberately uses eight extra letters that could have been avoided simply by saying the word teme’ah, it is powerful message to us to watch our language.

And yet, a cursory look at this week’s readings which deal with the laws of the ritual impurity caused by tzaraat (“leprosy”) reveals the word tamei occurring numerous times. Why is it that in the story of Noah the Torah goes out of its way not to use a negative word and here it uses it repeatedly, seemingly at whim?

The answer given by the Sages is that in Genesis the Torah is recounting a historical narrative, and can thus allow itself to be more subtle and not pronounce a negative word. However, when it comes to halachah,

to determining Jewish law, one cannot afford subtleties or flowery language; one must be crystal clear in laying down the law. The Law is sacrosanct and in matters of Law there may be no ambiguities. Our Parshah deals with dos and don’ts that must be expressed in no uncertain terms. When a rabbi is called upon to answer a halachic question, he should not beat around the bush. His response must be clear and unequivocal. And if it is treif, then he must pronounce it treif!

Now, generally speaking, rabbis should be gentle, nice and soft-spoken. They should suggest, not demand. The old “fire and brimstone” types don’t work that well today. But sometimes rabbis can be too gentle, too subtle and too undemanding. And not only in halachic matters but even in counseling.

Psychologists and social workers will, on principle, never be directive with their clients. It is part of their professional code not to impose their opinions or personal values on those seeking their guidance. They will try to help their clients “see the wood from the trees” so they can make their own informed decisions. Rabbis, on the other hand, should have no qualms about giving direction. After all, it’s their job!

A fellow once came to see me about his therapist. “She doesn’t tell me what to do,” he complained. I explained that therapists don’t work that way. “You want someone to tell you what to do? Go to a rabbi.”

If a couple goes for marriage counseling, a

Parshat Tazria

counselor is likely to guide them based on their hopes and aspirations. Do they really want to work it out, or are they going through the motions on their way to the divorce lawyer? And if it is the latter, the counselor may very well help them on their way. A rabbi will not hesitate to explain that marriage is sacred and should be worked on and that divorce is an absolutely last resort when all else has failed. The counselor might ask, “Would you guys like to stay married?” while the rabbi might say, “You must stay married.” Then, he may refer them to a professional counselor who is committed to saving marriages.

Remember the kleptomaniac who bumped into an old friend? The friend remembered how guilty he had felt because of his compulsive shoplifting and asked him whether he still had the problem. “No,” said the fellow. “I went to a psychiatrist and he helped me solve my problem.” “That’s great, so you don’t shoplift anymore?” asked the friend. “Sure I shoplift. I just don’t feel guilty anymore.”

Please G-d, rabbis will be soft, supportive, friendly, loving and gentle. Please G-d, they will give clear direction when they have to.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

HACHODESH

This being the Shabbat that falls on or before the first of Nissan, we also read the section of Hachodesh (Exodus 12:1–20), which relates G-d’s words to Moses in Egypt two weeks before the Exodus, instructing us to set the Jewish calendar by the monthly new moon, and to

regard Nissan as the “head of months.” G-d also instructs to bring the Passover offering, to eat it with matzah and bitter herbs, and to abstain from leaven for seven days.

THE POWER OF THE SEED

Except for a farmer, a gardener, and those who keep to a holistic diet, seeds seem to have very little importance in our lives. We try to genetically make lines of oranges that don't have them, we spit them out when we eat watermelons (if they still have them), and we avoid them like the plague if we have diverticulitis.

But if anyone asks me about where you see life's greatest mysteries, I talk to them about a seed. They are probably the most fascinating part of our world that exists, even more than the unexplored brain.

Think about it. This little tiny seed is basically a treasure-chest of DNA, prepared to (in the right circumstances) give birth to any of a variety of beings.

This little tiny seed is a treasure-chest of DNA, prepared to give birth to any of a variety of beings. Look around you. Probably the chair you are in came from a seed, the clothes you are wearing, the walls or paneling of the house you live in, almost all the food you eat, and last but not least—you and another 6 billion people (including all of their brains), all came from a seed.

But what does this have to do with life's mysteries?

Well, let's start by looking at a computer chip.

Considering that it has so much information, it stands on its own as quite an accomplishment, the result of hundreds of brilliant patents.

It can be as small as the tip of a needle, but contains within it the programming data for controlling very technical and complicated bits of knowledge. It took many years of science to design it to function properly, and it can perform many functions simultaneously in fulfilling its purpose of carrying the information needed for the proper functioning of your computer.

Now let's take an orange seed. It contains within it all the DNA info that exists about growing a tree, with all the complications: photosynthesis, establishing roots, transferring water and minerals to its body parts, sprouting in season—all this while creating oranges and seeds that will propagate future generations of oranges. However, even though the orange seed is much larger than a computer chip, it has one incredible quality that a computer chip does not have.

It is programmed to transform itself into the very object about which it contains information.

This would be comparable to creating a computer chip that is programmed to convert itself into an iPhone, or a golf ball, or another seed. Modern computer technology is just beginning to talk about the possibility of having chips that can become something besides the chip itself.

It has an incredible quality that a computer chip does not have: it can transform itself into the very object about which it contains information. If that doesn't pique your interest, add to this the fact that an animal or human seed is much more complicated than an orange seed, and a small fraction of the size of the smallest computer chip, and it grows to be something much more complicated than

an orange tree. It has the ability to impregnate an egg, and merge its data immediately with it to be able to create a completely new type of living being (with unique features unlike any other). Put together all of this, and so much more information that we know about seeds, and we begin to realize that we are dealing with a biological creation that is truly beyond amazing in its scope, and complicated far beyond its small size.

The seed is one part of our universe that gives us a small glimpse into the infinite intelligence behind the creation and the functioning of our world.

So next time you spit out a watermelon seed, do it with respect for what that seed is.

After all, you came from one.

By Rabbi Tuvia Teldon

In Jewish History

Monday, 25 Adar II, 5779 - April 1, 2019

Nebuchadnezzar died (397 BCE)

Death of King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian emperor who conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the first Holy Temple 26 years earlier, died on the 25th of Adar of the year 3364 from creation. (Jeremiah 52:31)

Rebbetzin's Birthday (1901)

Rebbetzin Chaya Mushkah Schneerson (1901-1988) of righteous memory, wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe of righteous memory, was born on Shabbat, the 25th of Adar, in Babinovich, a town near the Russian city of Lubavitch, in the year 5661 from creation (1901). In an address delivered on the 25 of Adar of 1988 (the Rebbetzin's 87th birthday, and about a month after her passing), the Rebbe initiated an international birthday campaign, urging people to celebrate their birthdays and utilize the day as a time of introspection and making resolutions involving an increase in good deeds.

Wednesday, 27 Adar II, 5779 - April 3, 2019

Passing of Zedekiah (397 BCE)

Zedekiah was the last king of the royal house of David to reign in the Holy Land. He ascended the throne in 434 BCE, after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia (to whom the kingdom of Judah was then subject) exiled King Jeconiah (Zedekiah's nephew) to Babylonia. In 425 BCE Zedekiah rebelled against Babylonian rule, and Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem (in Tevet 10 of that year); in the summer of 423 BCE the walls of Jerusalem were penetrated, the city conquered, the (first) Holy Temple destroyed, and the people of Judah exiled to Babylonia. Zedekiah tried escaping through a tunnel leading out of the city, but was captured; his sons were killed before his eyes, and then he was blinded. Zedekiah languished in the royal dungeon in Babylonia until Nebuchadnezzar's death in 397 BCE; Evil Meroduch -- Nebuchadnezzar's son and successor -- freed him (and his nephew Jeconiah) on the 27th of Adar, but Zedekiah died that same day.