

# Torah Weekly

April 19-25, 2020  
25 Nissan- 1 Iyar, 5780

Torah: First Torah: Tazria-Metzora: Leviticus 12:1 - 15:33  
Second Torah: Shabbat Rosh Chodesh: Numbers 28:9-15  
Haftarah:  
Isaiah 66:1-24; Isaiah 66:23

PARSHAT TAZRIA-METZORA

## Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

## Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside 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

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

Hyman & Martha Rogal Center  
5804 Beacon Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217  
412-421-0111  
Fax: 412-521-5948  
www.alephne.org  
info@alephne.org



**ALEPH INSTITUTE**  
No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

## Clouds, Curses, and Concealed Compassion

Does every cloud really have a silver lining? Is there a blessing in disguise inside every curse? Well,

admittedly, it isn't always so easy to discern, but we most certainly do believe in the concept.

This week's Torah reading deals with the purification of those afflicted by the strange leprosy-like malady known as *tzara'as* (a word uncannily similar to *tzores!*). The Parshah recounts

different types of *tzara'as* manifestations—on a person's body, in his clothes or even in the walls of his house. In the latter case, if after the necessary quarantine period the stain had still not receded, the stones of the affected wall would have to be removed and replaced with new ones. Now imagine the walls of your house being demolished. Is that a blessing or a curse? No doubt, the homeowner in question would not feel himself particularly blessed. But, according to our sages, the case was often different

for the Israelites living in the Holy Land. The previous Canaanite inhabitants of the land would bury their treasures inside the very walls of their homes. The only way an Israelite would ever discover those hidden valuables was if the stones of the house would be removed. When this happened, it didn't

take long for the poor unfortunate *tzara'as*-afflicted homeowner to be transformed into the wealthy heir of a newfound fortune. Suddenly his dark cloud was filled with linings of silver, gold and all

kinds of precious objects. For him, in a moment, the curse became blessing. Some time ago, a friend's business went into liquidation. Naturally, he was absolutely devastated. After a while he opened a new business which, thank G-d, prospered. He later confessed to me that in retrospect he was able to see how the earlier bankruptcy was truly a blessing. I still remember his words: "Before we were working for the banks; now we are working for our families." A woman in my congregation was suffering from heart disease, and the doctors said she needed bypass surgery. But she also had other medical complications which made a heart operation too dangerous to contemplate. Her quality of life was very poor. If she went for a walk, she would have to stop and rest every few minutes. Then, one day, she suffered a heart attack. She was rushed to the hospital and the doctors said her only chance of survival was an emergency bypass operation. There was a 50/50 chance of success, but if they didn't do it she had no chance at all. They performed the surgery and, thank G-d, she made a full recovery, enjoying many years of greatly improved quality of life with *nachas* from children and grandchildren. For years she would joke, "Thank G-d I had a heart attack. I got my bypass!" It was no joke. It would be naïve to suggest that it always works out this way. Life isn't so simple, and sometimes it takes much longer to see the good that is hidden in the traumas and difficulties of life. But we will continue to believe that G-d is

good, that He really does want the best for us, and that one day, with hindsight, we will see how each of our frustrations did somehow serve us well in the long term. All of us will at one time or another experience disappointments in life. The challenge is to learn from those disappointments and grow from them. Who knows if the wiser, more sensitive person we become is not the silver lining itself? In general, there are two qualities which form a powerful combination to help us appreciate that there is a hidden goodness inside every misfortune: faith and patience. With faith that there is a higher, better purpose to life, and with patience to bide our time for its revelation, we will be able to persevere and weather the crises of life. Please G-d, may we all find our silver linings soon. *By Rabbi Yossi Goldman*

## 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. (Leviticus 11:46-47) 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. (Rashi, Leviticus 12: 2 (from the Midrash) This, however, merely leads to another question: Why indeed were the animals created before humans? The Talmud offers two possible explanations: (Sanhedrin 38a.)

1. 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.
2. 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. (Chapter 29) 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—material capable of defying the Divine—and develop 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. (Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Likutei Sichot 7, Tazria Sicha 1.) *By Rabbi Menachem Feldman*

**A message from Rabbi Vogel:** *I would like to take this opportunity to thank the DOC food service and Chaplaincy departments for their efforts in making Passover so meaningful with the purchasing and distributing of Kosher food for Passover meals to the Jewish men and women incarcerated. The DOC really came through during this most trying time. Jewish men and women, please express your gratitude to the Chaplains and to Food Services. A message of thanks to the Central office would certainly be appreciated.*

**April 20, 2020 --- 26 Nissan, 5780**

**Passing of Joshua (1245 BCE)**

Joshua (1355-1245 BCE), who assumed the leadership of the people of Israel after Moses' passing (see Jewish History for the 5th of Adar) and led them into the Holy Land (see Jewish History for the 10th of Nissan), passed away on Nissan 26. He passed away at the age of 110, in the 28th year of his leadership. He was buried in his own estate in Timnat-Serach, in Mount Ephraim.

**April 22, 2020 --- 28 Nissan, 5780**

**Jericho's Wall Collapses (1273 BCE)**

On the seventh day of the encirclement of Jericho (see Jewish History for the 22nd of Nissan), the Jews, accompanied by the Holy Ark, circled the city seven times. After the blowing of the *shofar*, the walls miraculously crashed and sank, leaving the city open and unprotected. Jericho was easily conquered, becoming the first fortified Canaanite city to fall to the Children of Israel in their conquest of the Promised Land.

**April 22, 2020 --- 28 Nissan, 5780**

**Rebbe's Call (1991)**

On the eve of Nissan 28, 5751 (April 11, 1991), the Lubavitcher Rebbe issued an emotional call to his followers, and to the world Jewish community, to increase their efforts to bring Moshiach and the ultimate redemption. Spoken in an anguished voice and couched in uncharacteristically personal terms, the Rebbe's words deeply shocked the Chassidim present in the Rebbe's synagogue and reverberated worldwide. "How is it that the Redemption has not yet been attained?" the Rebbe cried. "That despite all that has transpired and all that has been done, Moshiach has still not come? What more can I do? I have done all I can to bring the world to truly demand and clamor for the Redemption... The only thing that remains for me to do is to give over the matter to you. Do all that is in your power to achieve this thing--a most sublime and transcendent light that needs to be brought down into our world with pragmatic tools... I have done all I can. I give it over to you. Do all that you can to bring the righteous redeemer, immediately! I have done my part. From this point on, all is in your hands..."

**April 24, 2020 --- 30 Nissan, 5780**

**Passing of R. Jacob Emden (1776)**

R. Jacob Emden, son of R. Tzvi Ashkenazi—known by the acronym *Yaavetz* (Yaakov ben Tzvi)—was a great scholar and author who lived in Emden and then in Altona (both cities in Germany). He was known for his zealotry and his willingness to fight for what he felt was right, disregarding any opposition. Among his works is a prayer book with commentaries known as *Siddur Yaavetz*.

**April 25, 2020 --- 1 Iyar, 5780**

**Passing of R. Menachem Mendel of Horodok (1788)**

Chassidic master Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok (1730?-1788), also known as Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, was one of the leading disciples of the second leader of the Chassidic Movement, Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch. Upon the latter's passing in 1772, R. Menachem Mendel was regarded by his colleagues as the leader of the Chassidic community in Russia, and Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi considered him his rebbe and mentor. In 1777, R. Menachem Mendel led a group of 300 Chassidim to the Holy Land and established Chassidic communities in Safed and Teberias. Rabbi Menachem Mendel passed away on the 1st of Iyar of 1788, and is buried in Tiberias.