

Torah Weekly

ת"ב

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.

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.

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

My Pesach Story My grandmother died on Shavuot when I was sixteen years old. She had chest pains while cleaning for Passover but didn't stop working for a moment. Up and down the four flights of stairs to her attic apartment, she carted out debris and brought up fresh new surfaces and food for the holiday. Her death by heart attack angered me. Why did she succumb to the pressure of tradition? Why didn't she complain? Why didn't she rest?

Now that I have a home of my own and have made peace with Bubbie's tradition, I, too, do the [Passover](#) overhaul. But I hire someone for the hard jobs and enjoy my husband's help. When Jews wish one another *Pesach kashervesame ach* ("A kosher and joyous Passover") they are conveying a great blessing. May you be healthy enough to make a [kosher](#) Passover with the spiritual strength to be truly happy doing it.

March 27 – April 2, 2022
24 Adar II – 1 Nissan, 5782

First Torah Reading:

Leviticus 12:1 - 13:59

Second Torah Reading:

Rosh Chodesh: Number 28:9-15

Third Torah Reading:

Hachodesh: Exodus 12:1-20

Haftarah:

Ezekiel 45:18 - 46:15; Isaiah 66:1;

Isaiah 66:23-24; Isaiah 66:23

PARSHAT TAZRIA

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 &

We offer 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 (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



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The philosophical conclusion of quantum physics is that physical reality is determined by a human observer. Halachah (Torah law) requires me to check every corner of my home. Corrective observation. I move my desk and refrigerator and look. I don't look only for half-eaten pretzels and candies ingeniously implanted by little hands. I look at how I lived my life this year and reconstruct it. All those unused extra dishes. I should invite more guests. Oy, my file cabinet. Worse, my inbox. Did I answer every message? Maybe I was proud or impatient in my correspondence. How many times did I take offense when I could have laughed?

Outside in the streets, on the roads, Jewish blood is being spilled. A baby in her mother's arms in Hebron. Two yeshiva boys in the Sharon. It is usual to suffer a terrorist attack in Israel during the pre-Passover heat waves. But this is a horrendous spiraling plague.

How many drawers do I have to empty, clean, and reorganize? How many mattresses do I have to overturn to get to the point? Where have I violated G-d's will? What is my part in this boomerang of violence? How can I clean up my dark inner corners so that next year we shall be free in Jerusalem, celebrating the final redemption?

By Illana Attia

Parshat Hachodesh On the Shabbat that falls on or before the 1st of Nissan, a special reading called "Hachodesh" (Exodus 12:1-20) is added to the regular Shabbat Torah reading. Hachodesh recounts G-d's historic communication to Moses in Egypt on the 1st of Nissan (2 weeks before the Exodus) regarding the Jewish calendar, the month of Nissan and the Passover offering.

Blessing on Blooming Trees A special mitzvah, which can be fulfilled only once a year, is to recite the berachah ("blessing" or prayer) made upon seeing a fruit tree in bloom: Blessed are you G-d our G-d, king of the universe, who left nothing lacking in His world, and created within it good creatures and good trees with which He gives pleasure to people. The first of Nissan (Shabbat) is the first opportunity to make this blessing, but it can be done anytime during the month of Nissan (referred to by the Torah as "the month of spring").

Sunday, March 27, 2022 --- 24 Adar II, 5782

Blood Libel Declared False (1817)

On Adar 24, Czar Alexander I of Russia declared the Blood Libel -- the infamous accusation that Jews murdered Christian children to use their blood in the baking of matzah for Passover, for which thousands of Jews were massacred through the centuries -- to be false. Nevertheless, nearly a hundred years later the accusation was officially leveled against Mendel Beilis in Kiev.

Monday, March 28, 2022 --- 25 Adar II, 5782

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)

Rebbitzin's Birthday (1901)

Rebbitzin 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 Rebbitzin'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, March 30, 2022 --- 27 Adar II, 5782

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.

Thursday, March 31, 2022 --- 28 Adar II, 5782

Decree Against Ritual Circumcision Rescinded (2nd century)

In Talmudic times, Adar 28 used to be celebrated to commemorate the rescinding of a Roman decree against ritual circumcision, Torah study and keeping the Shabbat. The decree was revoked through the efforts of Rabbi Yehudah ben Shamma and his fellow rabbis. (Megillat Taanit, Rosh Hashanah 19a)

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 minister 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.

Friday, April 1, 2022 --- 29 Adar II, 5782

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.

Moses had difficulty envisaging the moon's appearance at the exact moment of its monthly rebirth. After the sun set, G-d showed Moses the crescent new moon of the new month of Nissan, showing him the precise dimensions of the moon at the moment the new month is to be consecrated.

For the generations that followed, each new month was ushered in when two witnesses testified before the *Sanhedrin* (rabbinic supreme court) that they had seen the *molad*, the new moon. In the 4th century CE, Hillel II foresaw that the Jews would no longer be able to follow a Sanhedrin-based calendar. So Hillel and his rabbinical court established the perpetual calendar which is followed today -- until *Moshiach* will come and reestablish the Sanhedrin.

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.