

PARSHAT TAZRIA-METZORA

29 Nissan - 5 Iyar 5785
27 April - 3 May 2025

Torah: Leviticus 12:1-15:33
Haftorah: Kings II 7:3-20

PSALMS DAILY

Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

Psalms 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)

SEFER HAMITZVOT

Positive Mitzvah 153: Calculating Months & Years

We are commanded to establish a calendar based on lunar months and solar years, managed by the Sanhedrin (Jewish high court) in the Land of Israel. Months begin with the sighting of the new moon, and leap years are added periodically to align with the solar cycle. Unlike personal observances like Shabbat, this responsibility cannot be carried out individually. Even if the Sanhedrin inadvertently sets the wrong date or is under duress, their rulings are followed. Today, without a sitting Supreme Court, we rely on historical calculations to determine the calendar's structure, established by Hillel the Prince (d. 4125, or 365) until the coming of Moshiach.

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MONTHLY MARRIAGE

There are two kinds of human love: the intrinsic, calm love that we feel for people to whom we're related by birth; and the more intimate, fiery love that exists in marriage. This is why the husband-wife relationship is very different from the parent-child relationship.

The love within a family, between relatives who are born of the same flesh, is innate. The love between a mother and child, a brother and sister, two brothers, two sisters, comes easily. Since they're related by nature, they feel comfortable with each other. There's an innate closeness between them, so their love is strong, solid, steady, predictable and calm. There's no distance that has to be bridged; no difference that has to be overcome.

The love between a husband and wife isn't like that. Their love wasn't always there; they didn't always know each other; they weren't always related. No matter how well they get to know one another, they aren't alike. They are different from each other physically, emotionally, and mentally. They love each other in spite of the differences and because of them, but there isn't enough of a commonality between them to create a casual, calm love. The differences remain even after they are married, and the love between them will have to overcome these differences.

After all, husband and wife were once strangers. Male is different from female, so in essence they must remain strangers. Because of this, the love between them can never be casual, consistent or calm.

This acquired love is naturally more intense than the love between brother and sister. When love has to overcome a difference, a distance, an obstacle, it needs energy to leap across and bridge the gap. This is the energy of fiery love. Because the gap between husband and wife will never really close, their love for one another will continually have to reach across it. There will be distance, separation, then a bridging of distance, and a coming back together, again and again. This sense of distance intensifies the desire to merge.

To come together, man and woman have to overcome certain resistances. A man has to overcome his resistance to commitment, and a woman has to overcome her resistance to invasion. So, in coming together, husband and wife are reaching across great emotional distances, which intensifies their love. The absence of innate love actually makes the heart grow fonder. If a brother and sister were to have a fiery love, their relationship would

suffer. It's not the appropriate emotion for a brother and sister to have. Their love thrives when it's unbroken, unchallenged, constant, and calm. Not that they can't have disagreements, but those disagreements don't disrupt their love. On the other hand, if a husband and wife develop a calm love for each other, their relationship will not thrive. If they are too familiar with each other, too comfortable with each other, like brother and sister, their love will not flourish. True intimacy in marriage - fiery love - is created by constant withdrawal and reunion.

If a husband and wife are never separate, their love begins to sour because they are not creating an environment appropriate to that love. The environment of constant togetherness is not conducive to man-woman love; it's the environment for brother-sister love or parent-child love.

That's why the ideal blessing for a married couple is, "Your honeymoon should never end." A honeymoon - when two people who were once separate come together for the first time - should never end, because that's what a marriage thrives on.

The love between a man and a woman thrives on withdrawal and reunion, separation and coming together. The only way to have an environment conducive to that kind of relationship is to provide a separation.

There are many kinds of separations. A couple can live in different places, have differences of opinion, or get into arguments and be angry at each other. Often the arguing isn't for the sake of arguing, but for the sake of creating a distance so that husband and wife can feel like they're coming together. That's not a very happy solution. Making up after an argument may be good for a marriage on occasion, but not on a regular basis. It isn't a good idea to go looking for arguments, especially since separations can take a more positive form.

The physical separation given to us by G-d for that purpose is a much happier solution. That separation is created by observing a collection of Torah laws deriving from Leviticus 15 (this week's Torah portion), called "the laws of Family Purity" or "the laws of Mikvah." The word Mikvah refers to the ritual bath in which traditional Jewish women, since the days of the Bible, have immersed themselves following their monthly period and before renewing sexual relations with their husbands.

According to these laws of Mikvah, during the time that a Jewish woman is menstruating, and for one week afterward, she is physically off-limits to her husband. For those days, the physical separation is total: no touching,

no sitting on a swing together, no sleeping in the same bed.

Through the ages, all sorts of explanations have been given for these laws, but all of them have one thing in common: separation protects and nurtures the intimate aspect of marriage, which thrives on withdrawal and reunion.

This understanding is not unique to Jews. In most cultures throughout the world, the ancients practiced varying degrees of separation between husband and wife during the woman's menstrual period. Some, such as certain tribes of the Native-Americans, actually had separate living quarters, menstruant tents, where a woman would stay during her period. Later, these customs deteriorated into myths, taboos, fears, superstitions, hygienic arguments, and other rationalizations, in an attempt to make sense of a delicate and sensitive subject. But separation was such a universal practice that I wonder if human beings knew instinctively that male-female love thrives on withdrawal and reunion, on coming together following a separation. The body is actually respecting an emotional state. Just as the love between man and woman cannot be maintained at full intensity all the time but needs a certain creative tension without which it will not flourish, the body has a similar need.

As far as Jews are concerned, we know these cyclical changes were created for that very purpose. This is much more than a coincidence: it is how the body reflects the soul, how the body is created in the image of the soul.

Like everything else that exists in our lives, the cycle of withdrawal and reunion that exists in marriage is meant to be a reflection of our relationship with G-d. The two kinds of love, calm love and fiery love, exist not only among human beings, but between ourselves and G-d.

When we refer to G-d as our Father, it's an innate and intrinsic relationship. We don't have to work for it; it's just there. It's a steady, constant love, an indestructible love, a love compared to water-calm love.

But we also talk about how G-d is infinite and we are finite; G-d is true and we are not; G-d is everything and we are barely something. Because of these differences, we feel a great distance from G-d and the need to create a relationship with Him. Establishing a relationship in spite of the differences, in spite of the distance, is more like a marriage. That's a stormy relationship—fiery love.

More precisely, our soul loves G-d like a child loves a parent, because our soul



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No One Forgotten.

is of G-d. That love is innate and calm. When G-d tells this soul to go down into a body, that's a separation. Then our soul loves G-d with a fiery love, which, like the love between a husband and wife, does not come automatically. Acquired love is by nature intense and fiery.

Eventually, the soul will be reunited with G-d more intimately than before, just as the intimacy between a husband and wife is deeper when they come together following a separation. Therefore, when G-d says that a husband and wife must be modest with one another, that they may be together and then separate, come together and separate again, according to a monthly cycle, it's not an artificial imposition. It may produce discipline, which is nice. It may keep the marriage fresh, which is important. But there's more to it than that. It is, in fact, the natural reflection of the type of love that must exist between husband and wife. In order to nurture that stormy, fiery love, our way of living has to correspond to the emotions we are trying to nurture and retain.

If there's going to be a separation - and there needs to be one - consider the following: rather than wait for a separation to develop, where a

husband and wife get into a fight or lose interest in each other, let's take the cue from the body and create a physical, rather than an emotional, separation. Everyone is saying, "I need my space." It's true. Keeping the laws of Mikvah, when they apply, is one way of creating that space.

*By Rabbi Manis Friedman
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TAZRIA-METZORA IN A NUTSHELL

The name of the Parshah, "Tazria," means "conceives" and it is found in Leviticus 12:2. The name of the Parshah, "Metzora," is often translated as "leper" and it is found in Leviticus 14:2.

The Parshah of Tazria continues the discussion of the laws of Tumah V'taharah, ritual impurity and purity.

A woman giving birth should undergo a process of purification, which includes immersing in a Mikvah (a naturally gathered pool of water) and bringing offerings to the Holy Temple. All male infants are to be circumcised on the eighth day of life.

Tzara'at (often mistranslated as leprosy) is a supernatural plague, which can afflict people as well as garments or homes. If white or pink patches appear

on a person's skin (dark red or green in garments), a Kohen is summoned. Judging by various signs, such as an increase in size of the afflicted area after a seven-day quarantine, the kohen pronounces it Tamei (impure) or Tahor (pure).

A person afflicted with Tzaraat must dwell alone outside of the camp (or city) until he is healed. The afflicted area in a garment or home must be removed; if the Tzaraat recurs, the entire garment or home must be destroyed.

As outlined at the start of the portion of Metzora, when the Metzora ("leper") heals, he or she is purified by the kohen with a special procedure involving two birds, spring water in an earthen vessel, a piece of cedar wood, a scarlet thread and a bundle of hyssop.

When a home is afflicted with Tzaraat, in a process lasting as long as nineteen days, a Kohen determines if the house can be purified, or whether it must be demolished.

Ritual impurity is also engendered through a seminal or other discharge in a man, and menstruation or other discharge of blood in a woman, necessitating purification through immersion in a Mikvah.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Monday, 30 Nissan 5785 - 28 April 2025

Passing of Rabbi Joseph Ibn Migash (1141)

As a young man, Rabbi Joseph Ibn Migash studied under Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi (4773-4864, or 1013-1103) for fourteen years. After the latter's death, he succeeded him as head of the Talmudic academy in Lucena, Spain. His halachic opinions were sought after from afar, and he taught numerous disciples, including Rabbi Maimon, father of Maimonides (4898-4965, or 1138-1204). Although he did not study under him personally, Maimonides viewed Rabbi Joseph as his own teacher and greatly praised his erudition. Rabbi Joseph passed away on 30 Nissan 4901 (1141).

Passing of Rabbi Chaim Vital (1620)

Nissan 30 is the Yaahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of the famed Kabbalist Rabbi Chaim Vital (circa 5302-5380, or 1542-1620), author of the mystical work Eitz Chaim. Rabbi Chaim was the leading disciple of Rabbi Isaac Luria (the "Holy Ari," 52925332, or 1534-1572) and the transcriber of his teachings, which form the "Lurianic" Kabbalah.

Passing of Rabbi Jacob Emden (1776)

Rabbi Jacob Emden, son of Chacham 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 in Germany). He was known for his zealousness 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. His descendant and namesake was Jacob Javits (Yaakov Yaavetz), a longtime New York Congressman.

Tuesday, 1 Iyar 5785 - 29 April 2025

Construction of 2nd Temple (370 BCE)

Fifty-three years after the destruction of the First Holy Temple (on 9 Av 3338, or 423 BCE), Zerubabel and Joshua the High Priest began building the Second Temple with the permission of King Cyrus of Persia, though sacrifices had started a few months earlier on the site of the first Temple. Construction began on the 1st of Iyar 3390 (370 BCE), and later halted due to false accusations by Samaritans to King Cyrus. It

resumed many years later and completed 21 years later, during King Darius's reign.

Passing of Rabbi Menachem M. of Horodok (1788)

Chassidic master Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok (5490-5548, or 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 5532 (1772), Rabbi Menachem Mendel was regarded by his colleagues as the leader of the Chassidic community in Russia, and Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad, considered him his rebbe and mentor. In 5537 (1777), Rabbi Menachem Mendel led a group of 300 Chassidim to the Holy Land and established Chassidic communities in Safed and Tiberias. Rabbi Menachem Mendel passed away on the 1st of Iyar of 5548 (1788), and is buried in Tiberias, Israel.

Passing of Rabbi Yaakov Beirav (1546)

A native of Spain, Rabbi Yaakov Beirav was among those expelled from the country in 5252 (1492). He made his way to North Africa and from there to the Land of Israel, where he established a Torah academy, first in Jerusalem and then in Safed.

Rabbi Yaakov is famous for his efforts to reinstitute Semichah - the classical rabbinical ordination that had ceased to exist in its original form due to Roman persecution in the 4th century CE. His attempts were met with opposition, particularly from Rabbi Levi Ibn Chaviv of Jerusalem, and ultimately did not bear lasting results.

Passing of Rabbi Tzvi Ashkenazi (1718)

Rabbi Tzvi Ashkenazi was one of the leading rabbis of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, serving as rabbi in numerous communities in Europe, including Amsterdam and Lemberg (Kiev, Ukraine). He is known as the Chacham Tzvi, which is also the title of his work of halachic responsa. His son was Rabbi Yaakov Emden (the Yaavetz).

Passing of R. Shmuel Shmelke of Nikolsburg (1778)

Rabbi Shmuel Shmelke of Nikolsburg (5486-5538, or 1726-1778) was a major disciple of the second leader

of the Chassidic movement, Rabbi DovBer, the Maggid of Mezeritch, along with his younger brother, Rabbi Pinchas, who served as rabbi of Frankfurt. They were among the first adherents of the Chassidic movement to hold rabbinic posts in Germany. Many Chassidic leaders of the next generation were his disciples. He passed away on 1 Iyar 5538 (1778).

Wednesday, 2 Iyar 5785 - 30 April 2025

Rebbe Maharash Born (1834)

Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn, the fourth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, was born on 2 Iyar 5594 (1834), in the town of Lubavitch.

Thursday, 3 Iyar 5785 - 1 May 2025

Ancona Boycott (1556)

On 3 Iyar 5316 (1556), 25 Jews, who had been forced to convert to Christianity in Portugal and then escaped, were burned alive in Ancona, Italy, on the orders of Pope Paul IV. Gracia Mendes Nasi, a wealthy Jewish woman, who had also been forced to convert and then escaped to the Ottoman Empire, organized a Jewish boycott of the port of Ancona, which lasted for several months, financially ruining the city.

Passing of Rabbi Yeshaya of Kerestir (1925)

Known affectionately as Reb Shayale, Rabbi Yeshaya Steiner served as rabbi (and Chassidic rebbe) in Kerestir, a village in Northern Hungary. An accomplished Torah scholar and disciple of many leading Chassidic masters, he was renowned for his love for simple folk, his radical hospitality, and the miracles that abounded in his presence. He passed away on 3 Iyar 5685 (1925).

Shabbat, 5 Iyar 5785 - 3 May 2025

Napoleon Fails to Conquer Akko (1799)

The attempted conquest of Akko, Israel was a vital part of Napoleon's Mediterranean campaign against the Ottoman Empire. However, the local troops, supervised by the Pasha's Jewish advisor Chaim Parchi, valiantly withstood the two-month-long siege. After a final attempt to conquer the city on 5 Iyar 5559 (1799), Napoleon gave up his plans and the siege was lifted.