

Parsha Plug: Parshat Tazria

Vayikra 12:1-8	ויקרא יב:א-ח
<p>1 And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying: 2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying: If a woman conceives and gives birth to a male, she shall be unclean for seven days; as [in] the days of her menstrual flow, she shall be unclean. 3 And on the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. 4 And for thirty three days, she shall remain in the blood of purity; she shall not touch anything holy, nor may she enter the Sanctuary, until the days of her purification have been completed. 5 And if she gives birth to a female, she shall be unclean for two weeks, like her menstruation [period]. And for sixty six days, she shall remain in the blood of purity. 6 And when the days of her purification have been completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a sheep in its first year as a burnt offering, and a young dove or a turtle dove as a sin offering, to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, to the kohen. 7 And he shall offer it up before the Lord and effect atonement for her, and thus, she will be purified from the source of her blood. This is the law of a woman who gives birth to a male or to a female. 8 And if she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtle doves or two young doves: one as a burnt offering and one as a sin offering. And the kohen shall effect atonement for her, and she shall become clean.</p>	<p>(א) וַיְדַבֵּר יְקֹנֵק אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִשָּׁה כִּי תִזְרֶיעַ וְיָלְדָה זָכָר וְטִמְאָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כִּי־יָמִי נִדְתָּ דֹתָהּ תִטְמָא: (ג) וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשָׂרׁ עֶרְלָתוֹ: (ד) וְשָׁלְשִׁים יוֹם וְשָׁלְשַׁת יָמִים תֵּשֵׁב בְּדַמֵּי טְהָרָה בְּכָל־קֹדֶשׁ לֹא־תִגַּע וְאֶל־הַמִּקְדָּשׁ לֹא תָבֹא עַד־מִלֵּאת יְמֵי טְהָרָה: (ה) וְאִם־נִקְבָה תֵלֵד וְטִמְאָה שִׁבְעִים כְּנִדְתָהּ וְשָׁלְשִׁים יוֹם וְשָׁשַׁת יָמִים תֵּשֵׁב עַל־דַּמֵּי טְהָרָה: (ו) וּבְמִלֵּאתוֹ יְמֵי טְהָרָה לְבֵן אֹו לְבַת תִּבְרֵא כֶּבֶשׂ בְּנִי־שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה וּבִנְיֹונָה או־תֵר לַחֲטָאת אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל־מוֹעֵד אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: (ז) וְהִקְרִיבֹו לְפָנַי יְקֹנֵק וְכִפֵּר עָלֶיהָ וְטְהָרָה מִמִּקְרַדְמֶיהָ זֹאת תֹּוֹרַת הַיְיָ לְזָכָר אֹו לְנִקְבָה: (ח) וְאִם־לֹא תִמְצָא יָדָהּ דֵי שֶׁהָ וְלִקְחָה שְׁתֵּי־תֹוֹרִים אֹו שְׁנַי בְּנֵי יֹונָה אֶחָד לְעֹלָה וְאֶחָד לַחֲטָאת וְכִפֵּר עָלֶיהָ כַּכֵּן וְטְהָרָה:</p>

Keli Yakar on Vayikra 12:2	כלי יקר על ויקרא יב:ב
<p>The Yerushalmi explains that the sin of Chava is the source of women's menstrual blood, therefore the verse says "She will be purified from the source of her blood" (Vayikra 12:7). For all women need to be purified for the first sin from which impurity and foulness spread in this world and which caused all who are born to be impure for seven days [Chava was the cause of the sin, not Adam]. For had there been no sin, man would be like an angel of God.</p>	<p>...וכן משמע בירושלמי פרק במה מדליקין (הלכה ו) שחטא של חוה הוא מקור לדם נדה, לכך נאמר וטהרה ממקור דמיה כי כל הנשים צריכין טהרה על חטא ראשון אשר ממנו נתפשטה הטומאה והזוהמא בעולם וגרם לכל הנולדים טומאת שבעה, כי אילו לא חטא האדם היה כמלאך אלקים.</p>

Masechet Niddah 31b	מסכת נדה לא:
<p>Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai was asked by his disciples: Why did the Torah rule that a woman after childbirth brings a sacrifice? He replied: When she kneels to give birth, she clenches and swears never to have intercourse with her husband again. The Torah, therefore, ordained that she should bring a sacrifice. Rav Yosef</p>	<p>שאלו תלמידיו את רבי שמעון בן יוחאי מפני מה אמרה תורה יולדת מביאה קרבן? אמר להן: בשעה שכורעת לילד קופצת ונשבעת שלא תזקק לבעלה, לפיכך אמרה תורה</p>

<p>challenged: Does she not act presumptuously given that the absolution of the oath depends on her regretting it? Furthermore, she should have brought a sacrifice prescribed for an oath [a lamb or a goat]! And why did the Torah ordain that in the case of a male [the woman is clean] after seven days and in that of a female after fourteen days? [On the birth of a] male with whom all rejoice she regrets her oath after seven days, [but on the birth of a female] about whom everybody is upset she regrets her oath after fourteen days.</p>	<p>תביא קרבן. מתקיף לה רב יוסף: והא מזידה היא, ובחרטה תליא מילתא! ועוד, קרבן שבועה בעי איתויי! ומפני מה אמרה תורה זכר לשבעה ונקבה לארבעה עשר? זכר שהכל שמחים בו - מתחרטת לשבעה, נקבה שהכל עצבים בה - מתחרטת לארבעה עשר. ומפני מה אמרה תורה מילה לשמונה? שלא יהו כולם שמחים ואביו ואמו עצבים.</p>
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<p>Vayikra Rabbah on Parshat Vayikra 14:1</p>	<p>ויקרא רבה תזריע יד:א</p>
<p>[Commenting on וְקִדְּםָ וְאַחֲרָיָהּ, “You formed for me something behind and something before” Tehillim 139:5] Rebbe Yishmael son of Rebbe Tanchum said: ‘Behind’ means [you, man are] last of all the works [that were created] and ‘before’ means [you are] first in responsibility and punishment...Rebbe Simlai said: Just as man’s creation came after that of cattle, beasts, and birds, so too the law concerning man comes after that concerning cattle, beasts, and birds. This is indicated by the verse, “This is the law of the beasts and of the fowl and of every living creature” (Vayikra 11:46), which is immediately followed by the verse, “If a woman conceives” (Ibid 12:2).</p>	<p>אמר רבי ישמעאל ברבי תנחום אחר לכל המעשים והעונשין...א"ר שמלאי כשם שיצירתו של אדם אחר בהמה חיה ועוף כך תורתו אחר בהמה חיה ועוף הה"ד זאת תורת הבהמה ואח"כ אשה כי תזריע.</p>

<p>Rabbeinu Bachya on Vayikra 12:2</p>	<p>רבינו בחיי ויקרא יב:ב</p>
<p>The rabbis explain: If a woman emits her semen first, she gives birth to a boy; if a man emits his semen first, she gives birth to a girl. The meaning of the language of ‘semen’ regarding the seed of a woman refers to the blood of menstruation, for a woman does not have semen. But her blood in her womb is her seed and it is referred to as ‘odem’ (red substance), while the seed of the man is referred to as ‘loven’ (white substance). The odem and the loven are each called semen [in the creating of a fetus], as the rabbis explained, “There are three partners in creating man: God, father, and mother. The father gives the loven, which creates the brain, sinews, bones, nails, and white in the eye. The mother gives the odem, which creates the skin, flesh, blood, hair, and black of the eye. God gives the spirit, breath, beauty of features, eyesight, the power of hearing, the ability to speak and to walk, understanding and discernment.”</p>	<p>דרשו רז"ל: (ברכות ס. נדה לא) אשה מזרעת תחלה יולדת זכר, איש מזריע תחלה יולדת נקבה. והכוונה בלשון "מזרעת" על זרע הנקבה שהוא דם הנדות כי האשה אין לה זרע, אבל הדם שלה שברחם הוא הזרע שלה והוא הנקרא אודם, וזרע הזכר הוא הנקרא לובן והאודם והלובן כל אחד מהם נקרא זרע, וכן אמרו רז"ל בסוף פרק המפלת: (נדה שם) שלשה שותפין יש בו באדם, הקדוש ברוך הוא אביו ואמו, אביו מזריע לובן שממנו מוח וגידין ועצמות וצפרנים ולובן שבעין, אמו מזרעת אודם שממנו עור ובשר ודם ושער ושחור שבעין, והקב"ה נותן בו רוח ונשמה וקלסתר פנים וראית העין ושמיעת האזן ודבור שפתים והלוח רגלים ודעה ובינה והשכל.</p>

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "Holiness and Childbirth", Tazria-Metzora 5773

The first principle essential to understanding the laws of ritual purity and impurity is that God is life. Judaism is a profound rejection of cults, ancient and modern, that glorify death. The great pyramids of Egypt were grandiose tombs...The Torah is a tree of life. God is the God of life. As Moses put it in two memorable words: "Choose life" (Deut. 30: 19)...When a mother gives birth, not only does she undergo great risk (until recently, childbirth was a life-threatening danger to mother and baby alike). She is also separated from what until now had been part of her own body (a foetus, said the rabbis, "is like a limb of the mother") and which has now become an independent person. If that is so in the case of a boy, it is doubly so in the case of a girl – who, with God's help, will not merely live but may herself in later years become a source of new life. At one level, therefore, the laws signal the detachment of life from life. At another level, they surely suggest something more profound. There is a halakhic principle: "One who is engaged in a mitzvah is exempt from other mitzvot." It is as if God were saying to the mother: for forty days in the case of a boy, and doubly so in the case of a girl (the mother-daughter bond is ontologically stronger than that between mother and son), I exempt you from coming before Me in the place of holiness because you are fully engaged in one of the holiest acts of all, nurturing and caring for your child. Unlike others you do not need to visit the Temple to be attached to life in all its sacred splendour. You are experiencing it yourself, directly and with every fibre of your being. Days, weeks, from now you will come and give thanks before Me (together with offerings for having come through a moment of danger). But for now, look upon your child with wonder. For you have been given a glimpse of the great secret, otherwise known only to God. Childbirth exempts the new mother from attendance at the Temple because her bedside replicates the experience of the Temple. She now knows what it is for love to beget life and in the midst of mortality to be touched by an intimation of immortality.