

Parshas Tazria

This week's parsha is Tazria- which deals with impurities of the body, specifically beginning with a woman who gives birth, and the time it takes for her to be allowed to participate in the services of the Mishkan/Beis Hamikdash.

Interestingly, the number of days according to Rashi before the woman can be repurified is 40, which is concomitant with the minimum number of the volume of water required to purify oneself in a kosher mikva i.e., 40 se'ah.

This week we are lucky to have 3 Sifrei Torah taken out for distinct readings, the only other time aside from Simchas Torah this applies, is Shabbos Chanuka that is also Rosh Chodesh. Otherwise, we more often take out 2 Torahs (i.e., holidays, Shabbos Rosh Chodesh on a regular week). One Torah is to read the parsha of the week, Tazria. Second Torah is to read from Rosh Chodesh, and third Torah we read from "Parshas Hachodesh"¹ - one of four additional readings added to the weekly portion, in the weeks preceding Pesach.

Parshas Hachodesh is the portion from Shemos just after the Jews left Egypt and were officially designated a nation. Prior to this they were an extended family who connected to Hashem on a wholly spiritual plane, whereas after they are officially designated a nation, their performance of mitzvos becomes a reality, and requires definition and rules. The first commandment as a nation empowered us

to draw G-dliness down into this world, in a method that prior to this was unreasonable.

How appropriate it is, therefore, the rare occasion that in addition to the portion of Hachodesh, we also celebrate Rosh Chodesh Nissan, which is a manifestation of the mitzva to create a calendar and abide by its rules. The creation of the calendar, shows that there is a structure to our mitzvos that are to be performed in a timely fashion, have rules, that the Rabbanim are empowered to discuss and rule on.

This week's Haftora for the parsha comes from Melachim 2 Chapter 4:42-5:19. In this chapter we learn about Naaman the leper who wanted to help bring purity to the Land of Israel. This connects to the parsha in that in addition to the laws of childbirth, we are introduced to the skin afflictions and the related impurities.

Because we have Hachodesh and Rosh Chodesh, we read haftora from Ezekiel 45:16-46:18 (and for Sephardim 45:18-46:15). Ezekiel is telling us about the inauguration of the Beis Hamikdash, and the offerings brought. This relates to the fact that Hachodesh is read prior to Pesach, which coincides with the Nasi (princes) inauguration of the Mishkan-chronologically coinciding with what we read last week, the 8th day of that service. Chapter 46 discusses Shabbos and the new moon (again timely for this year's cycle-where we are reading Hachodesh and it is Rosh Chodesh) and it continues with the Nasi's role in the inauguration.

about the specific commandments prior in this time, and each one builds on our preparing for chag hageula-Pesach.

¹ There are 4. Shekalim and Zachor- read before Purim and Para and Hachodesh read before Pesach. There is a kabbalistic reason we are "reminded"

A final paragraph is added to the Haftora to recognize Rosh Chodesh- which is drawn from Yeshayahu (specifically the first and last posuk of Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Haftora 66:1/24) where Yeshayahu states that Hashem says, “the heavens are my throne and the Earth is my footstool, what house could you build for me, and what place can be my resting place?” And concludes with “and it shall be that at every new moon and on every Shabbos all humanity will come and bow before me says Hashem...” (which is also the last posuk of Yeshayahu).

The first posuk of that Haftora is a clear biblical source for the Alter Rebbe’s adage in Tanya, that the purpose of creation is to create an abode down in the lower realms (on the physical Earth). While Yeshayahu is criticizing the Jews for thinking that they can act abhorrently and be forgiven by bringing an atonement offering, but what is more important is cleaving and connecting to Hashem, which is a Chassidic/Kabbalistic premise of our purpose on Earth.

Hashem playing a role in the heavens and on Earth is precisely the grandiosity of the designation of the Jews as a nation with natural laws, that are harnessed in the service of Hashem, again specifically why the calendar- and stating the new months is paramount to our service.

The moon in Chassidic text is a reflector- Me’or, where as the sun is the source of light Ohr. The Jews are a Me’or – a moon, to the Ohr of Hashem. Shabbas is the day we recognize the kingship of the Ohr (Hashem) and remember that it is He who is the ruler of all, and master of the universe. Hashem giving us the commandment of recognizing the new months based on the new moon

connects the Ohr and the Meor directly- and it is the concretization of the Jewish people as “Yisroel, V’oraisa V’Kudsha Brichu Kula Chad”. Just as the reflector looks like the reflection, so too, our connection to the Ohr is direct, and paralled, and something we can cleave to (albeit with work). We may think that the source is distant from us, but Yeshayahu says, while Hashem in the Heavens is on His throne, the earth is directly connected to the throne as a footstool.

This Shabbos is a special one, where we are intertwining the realization of the Jews as a nation, the importance of purity and the sacrifices required to remain so, and the recognition of the new month. A new moon celebrates rebirth, which is an option we are given in our connecting to Hashem. We always have an opportunity to draw down spirituality, and when we don’t, it is a missed opportunity, but we don’t give up, the mission remains the same, day in day out.

As Yeshayahu says, there is a problem when a person remains disconnected from Hashem on condition he will ask for forgiveness, as opposed to always working toward cleaving to Hashem. Hashem when he designated us as a nation, gave us the power to serve Hashem using the Earth, and the physical, and we are defined by this especially the calendar. I frequently bring up the same point, which is that according to the first Rashi in Bereishis, the Torah could have begun with Hachodesh, and yet Hashem gives us the history of the world up until exodus with purpose. That Hashem created the universe, and us in it, and we are reminded to cleave to Hashem in this purpose and make a dirah bitachtonim.