

CSH Shabbat Service Schedule

April 2 | **Parashat Tazria / Shabbat HaChodesh**
April 16 | **Parashat Achrei Mot / Shabbat HaGadol**

April at a Glance

Saturday April 2	Shabbat HaChodesh (Announcing the new month)
Tuesday April 5	Rosh Chodesh Nisan
Saturday April 16	Shabbat HaGadol
Monday April 1	Fast of the First Born (Ta'anit Bechorot)
Monday April 18	Erev Pesach (First Seder in the evening)
Tuesday April 19	Pesach Day I (Second Seder in the evening)
Wednesday April 20	Pesach Day 2
Thursday April 21-Sunday April 24	Chol Hamoed Pesach
Monday April 25	Pesach Day 7
Tuesday April 26	Pesach Day 8

Friday, April 1, 2011 Candle Lighting 6:57 pm (Sag Harbor)

This week's Torah reading: **Tazria**

Annual: Leviticus 12:1 – 13:59 (Etz Hayim, p. 649)

Triennial: Leviticus 12:1 – 13:39 (Etz Hayim p. 649)

Maftir: Exodus 12:1 – 20 (Etz Hayim p. 380)

Haftarah: Ezekiel 45:16 – 46:18 (Etz Hayim p. 1291)



Musings on Tazria – And Adonai spoke to Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman (conceives and) gives birth to a boy: then she shall be unclean seven days...and when the period of her purification is over, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtle dove, for a sin offering, to the opening of the meeting tent of the congregation to the priest.

According to the text, then, giving birth, no matter how one translates tamah, creates defilement or impurity, and furthermore it also requires a forgiveness of sin. Nehama Leibowitz calls the laws of purity concerning childbirth the "most perplexing phenomenon" of all such laws. If the first commandment is to procreate, why is the mother fulfilling the mitzvah made unclean? Abravanel flatly states that the mother certainly doesn't need to bring a sin-offering, because she committed no iniquity.

So the meaning must lie deeper. Midrash Rabbah hints at it by its indirect response to the opening verses. R. Abba b. Kahana waxes lyric at the miracle of pregnancy and childbearing: "In the usual way, if a person holds a bag of money with the opening downwards, do not the coins scatter? Now the embryo has its abode in the mother's womb, but the Holy One, blessed be God, guards it that it shall not fall out and die. Is this not a matter for praise?" He also goes on to remark that nature has placed udders where the womb is, but a woman "has her breasts in a beautiful part of her body, and her baby sucks at a dignified place." Other rabbis remarked that the mother never expels the child after eating, and that menstrual blood is alchemically turned to milk for nursing. Furthermore, in utero the baby absorbs food through the navel, exactly what it needs, no matter what the mother eats, and it never needs to defecate. Finally, R. Aihu remarks

on another aspect of God's presence. When the baby is born and "full of ordure and all manner of nauseous substances," everyone kisses and hugs the baby anyway, especially if it's a male.

There is nothing ambivalent in our tradition about the birth of a child: It's pure, cosmic joy that joins heaven and earth, because the Talmud tells us that every child has three parents. It is the most important event in Jewish life, so amazing that the one most intimately connected, the one giving birth, is transformed by it. The mother has come as close to the life/death nexus as anyone can, and both she and the newborn are in a temporarily separate place from the rest of the world. The reason the mother brings a dove for her sin-offering is because the dove is a symbol of homesickness. As the dove returns to the nest, so all who are kept from the sanctuary return to the "nest." Leibowitz concludes that bearing new life makes the mother brilliantly aware of the greatness of God and at the same time, her own insignificance. She cites Isaiah's amazement at witnessing the vision of God "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up and God's train filled the Temple." (6, 1) His reaction was one of inadequacy: "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." (Ibid. 6, 5)

<http://www.malkadrucker.com/birth.html>

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**Our Daughters Ask:** Does Jewish tradition consider giving birth a religious experience? You'd never know it from this parashah!

**The Rabbis Answer:** Of course we consider it a religious experience! For in bearing children, women come in intimate contact with divine creation. And because giving birth connects a woman uniquely with both life and death, the Torah subjects her to special laws during this time. So for a week after giving birth to a son and two weeks after bearing a daughter, a new mother remains ritually impure. The Torah compares this period to "the time of a woman's menstrual infirmity" (12:2), when she is likewise barred from her husband's bed, as well as from certain religious precincts. After this period comes a longer but less restrictive phase, which ends when she brings a sin offering and is declared pure. A woman who bears a daughter remains ritually impure for twice as long as for a newborn son because of the physical differences between the genders. As with all distinctions, this one needs to be marked.

**The Sages In Our Own Time Explain:** This double period of quarantine was the Torah's way of acknowledging that a newborn female child would herself become a mother someday and would therefore become a source of blood defilement, like her mother.

Frankel, *The Five Books of Miriam, A Woman's Commentary on the Torah* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996), p.163.

<http://www.kolel.org/pages/5763/tazria.html>

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Because the maftir for this week begins HaChodesh hazeh lachem rosh chodashim – "This month shall be for you the beginning of the months" (Ex. 12:2), this is called Shabbat HaChodesh. The reading of the passage from Ex. 12 indicates that the months begin from Nisan, when the Israelites were redeemed from Egypt and became a people. From the practical point of view, it is a reminder that Pesach is imminent and that we should make ourselves well aware of the laws of chametz and matzah, which are detailed in this reading.

There is actually a link between HaChodesh and the portion for this week, Tazria, since both deal with new birth – HaChodesh with the birth of a people and its calendar, and Tazria with the birth of a child. In both cases the new birth comes as a consequence of pain, and just as a woman often says that the pain of childbirth was worth it when she sees her baby, so the Jewish people

might say they were able to handle the enslavement in Egypt because of their faith that it would be followed by a new era.

<http://www.oztorah.com/2008/04/shabbat-hachodesh/>



Refuah Shelaimah

Howie Jablow

Gary Gaines

Mazel Tov

Sheila and Norman Bleckner on the marriage of their son, Andrew, this weekend.

Lehitraot

Sarah Engel who is moving to Philadelphia. We hope she'll come back to visit soon.

Preparing for Passover Seder—It's not all about the food

http://www.tiferethisrael.org/HolidayInfo/Pesach%20Melodies/Pesach_Melodies.htm

http://ajws.org/assets/uploaded_documents/fltf_sourcebook.pdf

http://ajws.org/assets/uploaded_documents/fltf_sourcebook_seder_esources.pdf

End Quote

For attractive lips,
speak words of kindness.

For lovely eyes,
seek out the good in people.

For a slim figure,
share your food with the hungry.

For beautiful hair,
let a child run his fingers through it once a day.

For poise,
walk with the knowledge you never walk alone.

"Beauty Secrets," by Sam Levenson

Shabbat Shalom.

Stacy