

4) The Kohen (priest) is the one who determines if a person has *Tzara'at*. How does the Kohen determine that the person has *Tzara'at*? There seems to be no physical contact (touch etc) between the Kohen and the person suspected of having *Tzara'at*. What seems to be the main diagnostic tool of the Kohen (13:3-8)?

5) What happens to the person who is diagnosed with *Tzara'at* (13:45-46)? How do you think that this affects the person? What might it teach us about *Tzara'at*?

The weekly Haftarah Commentary  
By Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein, Senior CY Faculty in Talmud and Midrash,  
may be found at: <http://www.uscj.org.il/learn/commentaries/>

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## TORAH SPARKS

**Parashat Tazria – Shabbat Rosh Hodesh – Shabbat HaHodesh**

**April 8-9, 2016 – 1 Nisan 5776**

Annual (Leviticus 12:1-13:59): Etz Hayim p. 649; Hertz p. 460

Triennial (Leviticus 13:29-59): Etz Hayim p. 655; Hertz p. 463

2<sup>nd</sup> Sefer (Numbers 28:9-15): Etz Hayim p. 930; Hertz p. 695

3<sup>rd</sup> Sefer (Exodus 12:1-20): Etz Hayim p. 380; Hertz p. 253

Haftarah (Ezekiel 45:16-46:18): Etz Hayim p. 1291; Hertz p. 1001

The Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem is proud to announce its **SUMMER PROGRAM** for 2016. Each summer over 100 students of all ages and from around the world, come to Israel to study at the CY.

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## The Torah of the Woman who Gives Birth *Zot Torat Hayoledet*

**Rabbi Gail Diamond** is a freelance translator/editor, and served as Associate Director and teacher at the Conservative Yeshiva from 2001-2015.

*Parashat Tazria* begins with a short chapter (Leviticus 12) about a woman who gives birth. In verse seven, we find the words, “*Zot Torat Hayoledet*” – this is the Torah of the woman who gives birth.

The term “Torah” here refers to “instruction” in the most obligatory sense of the word – the way we must behave. The laws given here focus on a period of separation and ritual impurity after a woman gives birth. For thirty-three days after giving birth to a boy and sixty-six days after giving birth to a girl, a woman is to remain separate from holy foods (offerings eaten by priests) and from the Tent of Meeting (later this applied to the

Temple). After that, the woman brings two offerings – an *olah* – a whole burnt offering to God, and also a sin offering, a *hatat*.

We may question, as is asked in Bereishit Rabbah, why a woman who gives birth must bring a sin offering. A sin offering was intended to restore right relations between the person and the Divine. Through sacrificial rituals, the priests and the people seek to order and control life and death. In giving birth, the mother has risked her life. As Everett Fox notes, “this chapter... designates a new mother as *tamei* [ritually impure], most likely due to her intimate contact with the life/death boundary during childbirth. Her separation from and reintegration into the community echo similar customs in many societies...” (*The Five Books of Moses*, p. 562).

In *Tazria* we see the vulnerable state of childbearing women. Postpartum depression and related mood disorders are a very real phenomenon affecting fifteen to twenty percent of mothers of every culture, age, income level and race. Symptoms may appear any time during pregnancy and the first 12 months after childbirth and are treatable.

A 1983 study noted that cultures that had low incidence of postpartum mood disorders had rituals providing support and care for new mothers. These diverse cultures shared five protective social structures: **A distinct postpartum period; Protective measures reflecting the new mother's vulnerability; Social seclusion and mandated rest; Functional assistance; and Social recognition of her new role**

We see most of these protective mechanisms in *Parashat Tazria*. The distinct period provides social seclusion to assist the new mother. Ritual impurity ensures time off from marital relations and a focus on the mother-child bond. Ending this period with a sacrifice, the mother re-enters the community in a visible new status.

While childbirth (in many parts of the world) is no longer the extreme danger to women's health that it once was, post-partum depression continues to be an issue. We can and should work to prevent, treat and heal it – in part by speaking about it and raising awareness. *Tazria* reminds us of the importance of childbirth and the role the community plays in ensuring the health of mothers and babies. *Zot Torat HaYoledet*.

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For more information on preventing post-partum depression:

[www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net)

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/isnt-what-i-expected/201201/can-we-prevent-postpartum-depression>

<http://babygooroo.com/2012/08/how-other-cultures-prevent-postpartum-depression/>

## A Vort for Shabbat HaHodesh

By Rabbi Daniel Goldfarb, CY Faculty

"*Hahodesh hazeh la'chem* – this month (*Nisan*) is **for you** the beginning of months" (Ex 12:2). Rashi's first comment on the Torah (Gen 1:1) says that the new calendar was the first *mitzva* given to the Jewish people and the Torah should have started with it. Control of time is the measure of a free people; liberation from slavery began in the sphere of time, even before Bnei Israel left Egypt. *Nisan*, the Talmud says, is the month when redemption happened in the past and when it will take place in the future. *La'chem*, "for you," R' Zvi of Zaloshitz (Chasid, Poland) said, means that redemption is in *our hands*, dependent on us, not on anyone else, according to the good deeds we do.

## Table Talk

By Vered Hollander-Goldfarb, CY Faculty

*After the painful event of the death of 2 of Aaron's sons during the celebrations for inaugurating the Priesthood, we are taking a 2 week break from Tabernacle business and learning a bit about some purity issues. It is important to remember that it has nothing to do with hygiene. Over the next Parashot, let us try to understand what it might be about.*

1) The Parasha opens with birth (12:1-5). For how long is the woman who gave birth considered impure? What is she restricted in doing because she is in a state of impurity? How do you think that she might have felt about this? Why? (Note that most people went the Tabernacle only when a specific need arose.)

2) How does the woman mark the end of this period of impurity (12:6-8)? Why do you think that this kind of mark was chosen?

3) In chapter 13 we meet the concept of *Tzara'at*. This is usually translated as leprosy, but it is not the illness by that name in modern times. What can we learn about *Tzara'at* from 13:1-2? What in the description seems odd for an illness?