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Women After Childbirth

12: 1-8

Women after childbirth DIG: How can childbirth be linked to Eve's punishment in the garden? How are women kept safe through (the) childbirth? Why do you think it took twice as long to become ritually clean after giving birth to a girl than for a boy? Why did God have the male baby wait until the eighth day to be circumcised? Why the purification offering?

REFLECT: How do these purification mitzvot make you feel? How does modern culture affect worship and ritual practices where you worship? Is this necessarily bad? Why or why not? How should believers today relate to these mitzvot of purification given to the ancient Jewish community? Why don't believers keep all these mitzvot of the Torah?

Parashah 27: Tazria (She Conceived) 12:1 to 13:59

(See my commentary on Deuteronomy, **to see link click [Af](#) - Parashah**)

The Key People are Moshe, Aaron, Nadab, and Aaron's sons.

The Scene is the Tabernacle in the wilderness of Sinai.

The Main Events include ADONAI speaking to Moshe concerning women in childbirth; purification; various skin diseases; the role of the priest as hygiene inspector; in clean people dwelling outside the camp; and procedures to follow in examining fabric with mildew.

This parashah is a double portion. In regular years it is read with the next portion M'tzora (**to see link click [Ch](#) - The Initial Procedure for Cleansing Tsara'at**), in leap years it is read separately. But, because they are divided most of the time, we will be studying parashah Tazria separately. Before we proceed any further into the Torah, it will be useful to remind ourselves of the story we are reading. It is easy to become lost in the maze of **mitzvot** and rituals in **Leviticus**. It is all too easy to forget why we entered here in the first place. The Torah is telling us about **these mitzvot** at this particular time because this is

where they fit into the narrative. To best understand **the mitzvot**, then, a brief review is in order.¹⁹⁰

You will recall that after **ADONAI** brought **Isra'el** out of Egypt, **He** entered into a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. There at the mountain, **He** announced **His** desire for a holy place so that **He** could dwell among **His** people and draw near to **Him**. In response, **Isra'el** built **the Tabernacle**. Once it was completed, the Sh'khinah glory moved from upon Mount Sinai and descended onto **the Tabernacle**. **YHVH** took up residence therein. But there was a problem. The Sh'khinah glory was so intense that even **Moshe** could not enter. So, even though **Ha'Shem** could dwell among **His people**, that didn't mean that **the Israelites** could have any communion or relationship with **God**. **ADONAI** was still holy; mankind was still unholy. How could unholy mankind come near to the holy **God**? That's how **Exodus** ended.

Leviticus began with an answer to that question. **The LORD** called **Moses** from within **the Tabernacle** and gave him the instructions for the sacrifices: the first seven chapters of **Leviticus**. An **Israelite** wanting to draw near to **God** in **His** Holy Place was to bring a *korban*, literally *something brought near*. **Through the sacrifice, the worshiper was brought near to YHVH, and the gap between God and mankind was momentarily bridged.**

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise your great wisdom, love and power! Thank you that **Messiah Yeshua** bridged the gap between mankind and **God** with a one-time permanent sacrifice. **But now in Messiah Yeshua, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah. For He is our shalom, the One who made the two into one and broke down the middle wall of separation. Within His flesh He made powerless the hostility - the law code of mitzvot contained in regulations. He did this in order to create within Himself one new man from the two groups, making shalom, and to reconcile both to God in one body through the cross - by which He put the hostility to death. And He came and proclaimed shalom to you who were far away and shalom to those who were near - for through Him we both have access to the Father by the same Ruach. (Ephesians 2:13-18).***

*What joy it is to know that **Messiah's** sacrifice, because **He** is both holy and eternal, is a forever sacrifice! **Therefore He is also able to save completely save those who draw near to God through Him, always living to make intercession for them. . . But when Messiah appeared as Kohen Gadol of the good things that have now come, passing through the greater and more perfect Tent not made with hands (that is to say not***

of this creation), He entered into the Holies once for all - not by the blood of goats and calves but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 7:25, 9:11-12). Though I need to repent with a heart-felt confession each time I sin, like David in Psalms 51, I praise You for being a gracious God who forgives. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (First John 1:9). We praise and worship You for permanently bridging the gap and bringing the worshiper close to ADONAI through Your eternal sacrifice. In Yeshua's holy name and power of His resurrection. Amen

But in order to facilitate the sacrificial service, a sanctified priesthood was needed. **Leviticus Chapters 8 and 9** describe the initiation of the priesthood. OK, all seemed well. The sacrifices from **the people** were received, and the Sh'khinah glory appeared before all **Isra'el**. But then tragedy struck. The death of Nadab and Abihu made it clear that there was real danger involved in approaching **Ha'Shem**. Sobriety was needed, and so was **ritual purity**. Entering into the presence of **God** in **His** holy **Tabernacle/Temple** while in a state of **ritual impurity** was dangerous, even potentially deadly.

Therefore, the Torah departs from the narrative for several chapters to describe to us **the mitzvot of ritual purity**. **Leviticus 11** related **the mitzvot** of ritually clean and unclean animals (see [Bk - Ritually Clean and Unclean Animals](#)). **Leviticus 12 through 15** will relate **the mitzvot** of **ritually clean** and **unclean** humans.

Remember, Levitical impurity is the biblical concept that a person can be in a state which, according to the Torah, prevents a person from having any contact with the Tabernacle or Temple and its sacrifices. This ritual state of being **unclean** could be transferred from one person to another in a variety of ways, primarily through direct contact with a source of **uncleanness**. **Clean** and **unclean** have nothing to do with the actual physical condition of the person. **Additionally, the mitzvot of ritual impurity or purity have no relevant consequences except in regard to the things of the Tabernacle or the Temple and its priesthood.**

These mitzvot are being discussed now because they are immediately relevant to the **Tabernacle/Temple**. In that regard, the majority of **the purity mitzvot** have no practical relevance in today's world. As of the writing of this commentary, the Holy **Temple** in Jerusalem has not been rebuilt. Until it is, it really makes no practical difference whether one is ritually **clean** or **unclean**. Generally speaking, these passages are maligned as irrelevant and even repulsive. **The mitzvot** of **clean** and **unclean**, of leprosy and **impurity**, of mildew and discharges appear to have nothing at all to do with believers or our modern

world. In fact, the whole concept of being **ritually clean** and **unclean** seems to have come from another universe. But the observance of **the purity mitzvot** raised the consciousness of the presence of **ADONAI** to **the common Israelite** in the days of Moses to a new level. Those observing **the purity mitzvot** had a heightened awareness of the holy and the common, the intersection of **Divine** and secular. Therefore, the disconnect between **their** own mortality and the immortality of **YHVH** was constantly before **them**.



Contaminating vs unclean: An **Israelite woman** who gave **birth** to a **baby boy** was rendered ritually **unclean** for **seven days**. If **she** gave **birth** to a **baby girl**, **she** was rendered ritually **unclean** for **fourteen days** (see below). Subsequent to **her** initial **uncleanness**, **the mother** of a **baby boy** would remain in a state of lesser **ritual uncleanness** for another **33 days**, while **the mother** of a **baby girl** would remain in a state of lesser **ritual uncleanness** for **66 days**. During the first **7** (or **14 days**) **she** would be **ritually unclean** in the days of **her niddah** separation (**menstruation** separation), because a **menstruating woman** was **herself** regarded as both **ritually unclean** and **contaminating**.

The Sages offer complex distinctions between different levels of ritual impurity. For the sake of simplicity, we will refer to them as **contaminating** and **unclean**. **One who is contaminating** was ritually **unclean** and transmitted ritual **uncleanness** to other people and surfaces with which he/she came into contact. **This was a tradition of the Pharisees**, but it was not **Torah** from Sinai. So, for the first **seven days** (for a **boy**) or **fourteen days** (for a **girl**) after **childbirth** the new **mother** was **contaminated**. Everyone and everything **she** touched was rendered **ritually unclean**. And anything **she** sat on or reclined on became **contaminated**. After the first **seven days** (or **fourteen**), **she** would immerse **herself** in a mikvah and **her** status would change from **contaminating** to **unclean** (see [Cn](#) - **Female Menstrual Uncleanness**). The Torah refers to it as **the time of her purification (12:4)**. During that time **she** was unable to worship at **the**

Tabernacle or offer sacrifices; however, **she** was no longer **contaminating** to anyone.

Why, then, is **the** new **mother** rendered **unclean**? Simply because **she** had come into contact with the realm of sin and death. In this case, at **childbirth**, **she bled**. The Torah declares that the life of the soul is in **the blood**, which was meant to carry the life throughout the body. Hence, what was meant for life, **the blood**, was drained out of the body. The main point that **the Holy One** is stressing, is that in reality there are only two spiritual kingdoms: **the Kingdom of God**, wherein is life and righteousness and **the kingdom of Satan**, wherein is sin and death. The shedding of life-giving **blood** at **childbirth** was an occasion in which **YHVH** chose to illustrate the difference between the two kingdoms. Hence, **the** new **mother** was declared **ritually unclean** when **she** gave **birth**.

All the attention is usually placed upon **the woman**. After all, **she** was the one who was to become **ritually unclean**. But **her** husband who comforts **her**, the midwife who assisted **her**, and **the baby** who nurses from **her** were also rendered **ritually unclean**. In practical terms, that meant that the husband and the midwife would be required to be immersed in the mikvah before worshipping at **the Tabernacle/Temple**, eating of sacrificial foods or handling priestly portions. But the lesson of **ritual uncleanness** at **childbirth** runs far deeper.

I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth (Genesis 3:16): At the start of life, we are all steeped in **uncleanness**. It is part of being human. From the cradle to the grave we are either **unclean**, producing **uncleanness**, or becoming **unclean**. It is simply the fallen nature we inherit at **birth**, or the condition called total depravity (see the commentary on **Romans Ae - My Position on TULIP or Calvinism**). **Childbirth** can be linked to **Eve's** punishment in the garden. After falling into sin, **Eve** was told: **I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth; in pain you will bring forth children (Genesis 3:16)**. It was part of the judgment that fell upon all humanity. **Ritual impurity** is that which excludes mankind from the presence of **God** on earth. It is that which kept **the Israelites** out of **the Tabernacle/Temple**. In a similar way, **Adam and Eve** were driven from the garden. **They** were expelled from the presence of **God** on earth. Part of that expulsion was the judgment of **pain in childbearing**. Although **childbirth** is certainly not a sin, it is tainted with the original sin of **Adam and Eve**. This is an important clue to the deeper meaning of **ritual impurity**.¹⁹¹

The woman will be preserved (First Timothy 2:13-15): From Rabbi Sha'ul's perspective, the **pain** of **childbirth** brings with **it** an atoning value for women. He

states: **But women will be kept safe through (the) childbirth, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety (Second Timothy 2:15).** I believe the meaning of being kept safe, literally *pulled from danger*, here means spiritual salvation. There are four reasons for this. First, because the context of this verse has to do with **Eve**; **she** must be the subject of **will be kept safe**. Consequently, it is relevant to consult **Genesis**, and **Genesis 3:15** tells us that **the ancient Serpent's** victory will not be final. **The Seed of the woman will crush Satan's head.** This points specifically to **Messiah's birth**, not to **childbirth** in general.

Secondly, a spiritual catastrophe is the subject of **Second Timothy 2:14**, and spiritual deliverance is to be expected as a part of the discussion. **Eve's** salvation was secured because **God** promised deliverance through **His Seed, Yeshua Messiah**. By **the great childbirth**, by that which has produced **the Savior, the childbearing** of Mary has undone the sin of **Eve**.

Thirdly, the definite article that appears before **childbirth** indicates a definite and particular event, rather than **childbearing** in general. There is certainly a more obvious inference to be drawn from the presence of the article. The Greek language had a very simple way to indicate **childbearing** in general. All that was necessary was to omit the article. This would throw emphasis upon the quality or idea in the noun, rather than individualizing it. The presence of the article makes **the birth of Messiah** the more credible. It was not just any **childbirth**, it was **THE** (emphasis mine) **childbirth**.

Fourthly, the preposition *dia*, meaning **through**, is very important. It comes from the Greek word *duo*, meaning *two*, and directs our attention to a connection or channel between the two points. The two points are the fallen **Eve** and **her** salvation. This channel is **the childbearing**. It was through **the Seed of the woman** that salvation was possible for **her** and for all **women** (see the commentary on **Genesis Lv - Women and Spiritual Gifts**).

Ritual purification of the mother: The theme of this chapter is not personal holiness, but **ritual purification of the mother**, without which **she** could not return to normal life in **her** home and community. Therefore, nothing in **Leviticus 12** should be interpreted to teach that human sex is "dirty," that pregnancy is defiling, or that babies are impure. **YHWH** created humans **male and female (Genesis 1:27)**, and when **God** declared **His** creation **very good (Genesis 1:31)**, that declaration included sex. **He** commanded our first parents **to be fruitful, and multiply (Genesis 1:28)**. In spite of the current climate of abortion

and the negative attitude towards babies by many today, Scripture presents **children** as a blessing from **ADONAI** (**Psalm 113:9, 127:3-5, 128:3; Proverbs 17:6; Matthew 19:14**). And if, for some reason a pregnancy was unwanted, **the Jews** would never have considered aborting **the baby**.¹⁹²

The birth of a son (12:1-4): **ADONAI** said to Moshe, “Tell the people of Isra’el: ‘If a woman conceives and gives birth to a boy, she will be unclean for seven days with the same uncleanness as in niddah (see Cn - Female Menstrual Uncleanness), when she is having her menstrual infirmity’ (12:1-2).” The Hebrew *devotah*, translated **her infirmity**, derives from the root *davah*, meaning *to be ill or weak*. In **15:33**, the **menstruating woman** is called *davah*, meaning *infirm*.¹⁹³ **She is to wait an additional thirty-three days (bringing the total days to forty) to be purified from her blood; she is not to touch any holy thing or come into the sanctuary until the time of her purification is over (12:3-4).**

Because we are so far removed from the world of **the Tabernacle/Temple**, some have misunderstood this passage to mean that **a new mother** could not enter the assembly (synagogue, congregation, or church) until after **her time of purification** was completed. Suffice to say that “one’s place in the assembly” is certainly not the Holy **Temple**, and **the mitzvot of purity** do not apply. If a new, **ritually unclean mother** were to be barred admission to the assembly, then the entire congregation would also be barred on the basis that everyone carries some degree of **ritual uncleanness**.

“On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin is to be circumcised” (12:3). In the life of **the Master**, we note how zealous **Miriam** was to follow **the mitzvot** of the Torah (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ At - On the Eighth Day He was Circumcised and Named Yeshua**). The faith of each individual believer rests upon the bedrock foundation of the Bible’s inspiration. If the Bible is of human origin, then it logically follows that the facts and doctrines found there are only as reliable as human knowledge can be. However, if the biblical records were provided by **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh (Second Peter 1:20-21)**, then we have every reason to believe that the facts and doctrines recorded there are free of those imperfections and blemishes that characterize all purely human efforts.

The Greek word used in the New Testament to express the concept of inspiration is *theopneustos*, and itself derives from two roots -*theos*, **God**, and *pneustos*, breathed (from *pneo*, to blow or breathe). *Theopneustos*, therefore, would mean *God-breathed*. The word implies an influence from without producing effects that are beyond natural

powers. The proper view of inspiration often is referred to as being verbal (word-for-word) and plenary (complete). This concept suggests that men wrote what **God** directed, without errors or mistakes, yet with their own personalities reflected in their writings.

A close examination of the Bible reveals startling proof of its inspiration. Sometimes that proof comes in the form of prophecy (always minutely foretold and completely fulfilled). Sometimes the proof comes in the form of scientific facts that were placed in the divine record hundreds or thousands of years before they were known to the modern scientific mind. This brief article deals with the latter - an important piece of scientific foreknowledge found with the biblical text that was completely unknown to man until fairly recently.

In **Genesis 17:12**, **God** specifically directed **Abraham** to circumcise newborn males on **the eighth day**. Why **the eighth day**? In 1935, professor H. Dam proposed the name "vitamin K" for the factor in foods that helped prevent hemorrhaging in baby chicks. We now know vitamin K is responsible for the production (by the liver) of the element known as prothrombin. If vitamin K is deficient, there will be a prothrombin deficiency and hemorrhaging may occur. Oddly, it is only on the fifth through the seventh days of the newborn male's life that vitamin K (produced by bacteria in the intestinal tract) is present in adequate quantities. Vitamin K, coupled with prothrombin, causes **blood** coagulation, which is important in any surgical procedure. Holt and McIntosh, in their classic work, *Holt Pediatrics* (1953), observed that a newborn infant has "peculiar susceptibility to bleeding between the second and fifth days of life. Hemorrhages at this time, though often inconsequential, are sometimes extensive; they may produce serious damage to internal organs, especially to the brain, and cause death from shock and exsanguination" (*Holt Pediatrics*, pages 125-126). Obviously, then, if vitamin K is not produced in sufficient quantities until days five through seven, it would be wise to postpone any surgery until sometime after that. But why did **ADONAI** specify **day eight**?

On the eighth day, the amount of prothrombin present actually is elevated to above one-hundred percent of normal - and is the only day in the male baby's entire life in which this will be the case under normal conditions. If surgery is to be performed, the eighth day is the perfect day to do it, when vitamin K and prothrombin levels are at their peak.¹⁹⁴

We should commend the many hundreds of workers who labored at great expense over a number of years to discover that the safest **day** to perform circumcision is **the**

eighth. Yet, as we congratulate medical science for this recent finding, we can almost hear the pages of the Bible rustling. They would like to remind us that four thousand years ago, when YHVH initiated **circumcision** with **Abraham**, **he** didn't pick **the eighth day** after many centuries of trial-and-error experiments. Neither **he** nor any of **his** company from the ancient city of Ur in the Chaldees had ever been **circumcised**. It was a day picked by **the Creator** of vitamin K. Moshe's information recorded in **Genesis 17:12** (see **Genesis En - For Generations to come Every Male Who Is Eight Days Old Must be Circumcised**), was not only accurate, but was centuries ahead of its time. How did **Abraham** have access to such information? The answer, of course, is provided by Paul: **All Scripture is inspired by God (Second Timothy 3:16)**.¹⁹⁵

The birth of a daughter (12:5): But if she gives birth to a girl, she will be unclean for fourteen days, as in her niddah; and she is to wait another sixty-six days (bringing the total **days** to **eighty**) to be purified from her blood. If the baby was a **daughter**, then the time of **the mother's purification** was extended. Many suggestions have been made for the doubling of the time for a **baby girl**, but convincing evidence is lacking.¹⁹⁶

There is no mention that **the girl** is to be **circumcised**. So restricting **circumcision** to **males** does lead to a natural question: Since **circumcision** is **the covenant sign** (see the commentary on **Genesis E1 - God's Covenant of Circumcision with Abraham**), and only **males** receive it, does this mean that only **males** are considered **covenant** members? No way! In **Israelite** society, the father was considered the head of the family, and thus the family representative. If he received **the sign of the covenant**, then all who were members of the family - including all **the females** - were considered to be **covenant** members as well (**Genesis 6:18**).¹⁹⁷

The purification offering (12:6-8): For **the purification** ritual, the correct sacrifice had to be made. Our parashah teaches that **when the days of her purification** were over, **whether for a son or for a daughter**, she was to bring a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or dove for a purification offering to the entrance of Tabernacle/Temple, to the priest to mark her re-entry into the worship community of Isra'el. The priest then offered it before ADONAI and made atonement for her; thus she was purified from her discharge of blood. That ritual of atonement was followed simply so that **the woman** would be ritually clean and allowed access to **the Tabernacle/Temple**, but not that **she** be forgiven. No forgiveness was necessary because there was no sin. **Such is the mitzvah for a woman who gives birth, whether to a boy**

or to a girl. If she can't afford a lamb, she is to take two doves or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be ritually clean. The special **mitzvah** for the offering of the very poor shows that **God** was more interested in the offeror than the offering. The option of **two doves** or **two pigeons** was necessary because **doves** were migratory and not available year-around. According to **Luke's Gospel** (see **The Life of Christ Au - Jesus Presented in the Temple**), **Joseph** and **Mary** brought **birds**: they were very poor.¹⁹⁸