



Pardes's Parsha Discussion with Rabbi Alex Israel

TORAH TO DISCUSS WITH TEENS AND ADULTS AROUND YOUR SHABBAT TABLE

Tazria Metzora. Setting Goals and Making Progress

- How are you managing stuck at home, just with the family?
- Are you feeling, like me, about like Groundhog Day? Is time dragging a little?
- Do you feel that you have managed to grow or achieve during our period of lockdown?

This week we will speak about Time and human processes.

There is a dynamic of seven and eight which animates our parsha and recent parshiot:

- Parshat Tzav-Shemini, described the 7 days of *milu'im*, the Mishkan's inauguration, followed by the "Yom Hash'minni" – the eighth climactic day of revelation (9:1).
- Our parsha, Tazria, opens with seven days of impurity following the birth of a boy. The eighth day is the Brit Mila (12:1-3).
- The Metzora/leper undergoes a 7-day purification period followed by an eighth day which bestows full purity. (There is also the seven-fold sprinkling of the blood/water/oil mixture. 14:7,16.)
- The purification process of the Zav and the Nidda, also contain the 7-8 pattern. (15:13-14; 28-29).

Note that in each case, we are not simply dealing with the number seven, but rather, with a unit of seven followed by "the eighth day." There is no linear ascent or progression of 1-2-3-4-5-6-7, but rather, the 7 unit is presented as an integral unit where the eighth day is the target, the climax, a new level, the conclusion and completion.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (9:1) compares this 7-8 pattern to a musical octave.



"...by such a counting of seven days, the condition of a previous period is entirely closed, and with the eighth day a new beginning is made, similar to an octave in music, on a higher level."

Just like musical octaves, the cycles ascend, up and up. The opening note is akin to a new beginning. Indeed, it is only reached by the preceding "seven." However, the number eight is not a zenith, a peak. Rather it is again the first note, the fresh beginning of yet another cycle, of a new level. It is a gateway into a new reality, higher than the previous reality. But it doesn't stop with eight. Eight becomes the "number one" of the new reality, as we leave the previous existence behind.

The pattern of seven and eight becomes a model of ongoing human progress.

Please Discuss:

- Is there any area that you feel you can use this period to grow?
- How can you use the unit of a single week to chart upward progress?
- Is a week too short or too long to expect real change? Why does the Torah use the week unit as its measure of change?

Shabbat Shalom!