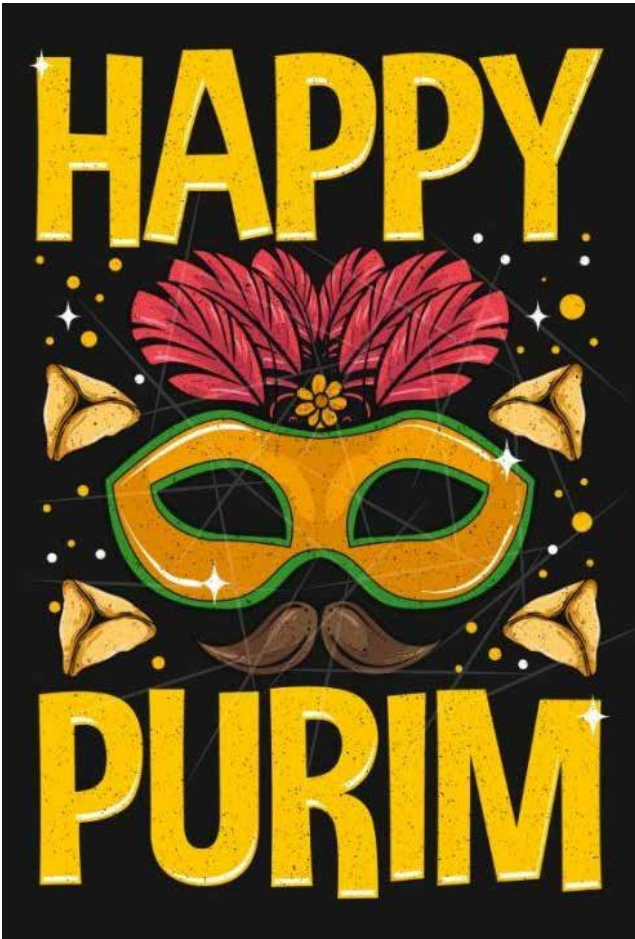




# The Shofar

Mar-Apr, 2026      Congregation House of Israel      12 Adar - 13 Iyar, 5786



March 3, 2026



April 2 - 9, 2026

See Sisterhood article on page 5 for seder details

# Thank You

We would like to thank the following donors (as of February 20, 2026)

## General Fund

### Sheldon Kleinman

*In loving memory of Carol Kleinman  
In loving memory of Alyce Brand*

### Ross and Ruth Sedler

*In loving memory of Harry Sedler  
In loving memory of Shirley Sedler  
In loving memory of Charles Bellin  
In loving memory of Crany Bellin*

### Morey Silverman

*In loving memory of Bernard Silverman*

### Steven Strauss

*In appreciation of House of Israel*

## The Shofar

Published bi-monthly by:

Congregation House of Israel

PO Box 20802

300 Quapaw

Hot Springs, AR 71903

(501) 623-5821

Website: <http://hschi.org>

Editor: Shelly Kleinman

Webmaster: Shelly Kleinman

Email to: [info@hschi.org](mailto:info@hschi.org)

Submissions due the 15th of the prior month.  
Distributed free to members, prospective members, local clergy and other interested parties.

# It's Purim Time

By Sherrill Nicolosi

Purim, considered to be the Jewish “festive festival”, is celebrated on 14 Adar, this year March 2-3, 2026.

Often described as a Jewish Mardi Gras because of its festivities involving masquerades, parades, and carnivals, the backdrop to this story as told in the Megillah (the Scroll of Esther) is actually very dark.

During the reign of King Ahashueros of Persia, his courtier, Haman, an extreme Anti-Semite, ordered the annihilation of all Jews. Haman cast lots-“pur”- to name the date the Jews of the country would be slaughtered. One Jew, Mordecai, a member of the King's Court, and his lovely niece, Esther, foiled the massacre.

After a series of events, the beautiful Esther, who had been made queen by Ahashueros, asked the king to spare her and her people, as she told him of

Haman's plot to destroy her people, the Jews.

Haman was hanged, and thereafter, the Jews were victorious in a series of battles, and the celebration of good over evil began.

Hamantashen, a pastry shaped like Haman's hat, noise makers called graggers, the wearing of costumes, singing songs, and the reading of the Megillah, as well as gift giving to the poor, make the festivities of Purim a joyful story of triumph for the Jews.



## Reb Shelly's Desk

### Purim Is No Joke



I was reminded of an old joke this week:

Do you know the difference between a pessimist and an optimist?

The pessimist says, "It can't possibly get any worse than this." The optimist says, "Of course it can!"

How do we find optimism and a will to work for positive change in the face of seemingly overwhelming challenges? Where do we locate hope amidst the paralyzing losses of the quagmire in Gaza, virulent antisemitism, and lingering threats of a full blown conflict in Israel's North? With so much despair and worry around us, how do we avoid pessimism that sinks us further into darkness? Purim, which addresses such worries in the guise of a joke, offers ideas to ponder.

Many of the serious messages of Purim are encoded in word play. The centrality of the concept of *hester panim* or "the concealed face of God," which also alludes to "Esther's face," or "*ha-panim shel Esther*," is an inside joke about the fact that the Book of Esther is the only text in the Hebrew Bible, except for the Song of Songs, that does not mention the name of God explicitly.

It is not clear if the Jewish disconnect with the divine in the Book of Esther is the result of God's withdrawal during the destruction of the First

Temple – from which Mordechai and Esther's ancestors are said to have fled – or if God grows distant from the Jews only gradually because of their assimilation in Persia. Either way, the story intimates that a people have lost their protector, and that makes Haman's job easy, at least for a while.

We celebrate Purim as a kind of Jewish Mardi Gras, a ritualized anti-structure, breaking down day-to-day personae by covering faces with masks just as the Divine seems to have done in the original tale. Until Esther takes Mordechai's advice to stand up for who she is and fight for her people, she represents how the Jews of Persia have lost their bearings to their rightful place in the world, to their own culture, and to their Creator. One psycho-theological reading of the Book of Esther is that it is a parable for how connectedness with God depends upon fully embracing one's own self.

Purim celebrates jokes and riddles, drinking, and flipping our woe on its head. But it is also a reminder to dig deeper into who we are, what we care about, and why we are here in order to find a lit path out of the darkness of feeling abandoned or lost.

One of the best ways to find ourselves is to dedicate energy to something greater than ourselves – to serve others, to be of use, to dream of a better world. Purim is a wake-up call, a search for the clear face of optimism in a confusing hall of mirrors. Getting lost can make you laugh or it can make you cry, but above all it makes you think about what really matters.

And that's no joke.

## Welcome New Members

Gregg and Katherine "Katie" Gordon

Brian and Susie Rosenthal



# Our Esther Moment

by Elliot Cosgrove

Megillat Esther is a remarkably relevant guide as to what it means to be a Jew today.

It didn't happen all at once. It took work to shed the names, accents and customs of our immigrant forebearers, but eventually, we did it. An unspoken bargain was struck: What we would lose in distinctiveness, we would gain in societal acceptance. In the abstract, we longed for a return to the land. "Next Year in Jerusalem," we said at our seder tables. In practice, we were no longer homeless; the diaspora was our home now. We had made it.

The blessings were real. So, who could blame us for being shocked when the rug was pulled from beneath our feet? People were saying that we were different, that because of our fealty to our people and faith, we had become a threat to the social order. A sharp uptick in antisemitism. Our golden age was over, or maybe, some opined — it was never so golden after all.

Where do we turn for guidance for such a time as this?

Megillat Esther is a remarkably relevant guide as to what it means to be a Jew today. One of the most beautifully crafted of all biblical literary creations, Esther tells the tale of how a diaspora Jewish community navigated its status as a distinct minority in the majority culture of Persia's capital Shushan.

Having deposed Queen Vashti, King Ahasuerus issues an edict to bring forth every young maiden for consideration to be the new royal consort. While the event is staged the world over as some sort of Miss Persia beauty pageant, it is not clear if this palace proclamation was received as an invitation for social advancement or a fear-inducing edict akin to Pharaoh's decree against the male children in the book of Exodus. Opportunity and fear: a possibility to move up in which much would be given up.

Esther is introduced. Aside from her physical beauty, we know Esther is a Jew and an orphan, the ward of her foster father Mordechai. Mordechai is actually the first person in the Bible to be called a Jew, *Yehudi* — referring to one descended from the tribe and land of Yehudah or Judah. Citizens of their host country, but distinct as a people and connected to another land. One senses that Esther's orphaned status was not just biological. Separated from her family of origin and land, she was Jewish, a Judean exile in

King Ahasuerus's court.

When Esther enters the king's palace, Mordechai advises her to keep her identity secret — the name Esther from the Hebrew *astir* meaning "I will hide." Twelve months of oil and myrrh; a makeover process worthy of the best — and worst — of reality TV.

Esther sheds any vestigial traces of her religious identity and assimilates into her non-Jewish environs. She becomes queen by marrying a non-Jewish king — the ultimate act of assimilation. Esther has gained much, but has also left much behind. One wonders how she felt when she looked in the mirror and saw a Persian queen staring back at her.

If the first two chapters of Megillat Esther signal the comforts of Persian Jewish life, it is in the third chapter that the bottom falls out. Haman is promoted in the king's court and Mordechai refuses to bow down. Haman's wrath waxes hot. In Haman's mind, Mordechai's actions are a reflection on all Jews. Haman brings the matter to the King's attention:

"There is a certain people, scattered and dispersed among all the other peoples in all the provinces of your realm, whose laws are different from those of any other people and who do not obey the king's laws ... If it please Your Majesty, let an edict be drawn for their destruction." (Esther 3:8-9)

Ahasuerus, operating either out of willed ignorance or political expediency, gives the green light for them to be destroyed. As news of the edict spreads through the Kingdom, the city of Shushan is "dumbfounded." They do not seem to bear the same Jew-hatred as Haman, but it would take a rare form of courage to object to him, a fact which Haman was probably counting on. Haman understood that his hatred combined with the king's enabling and a nation of bystanders was all he needed to carry out his plans.

The decisive turning point arrives in chapter four. Mordechai relays the ominous news of Haman's edict to Esther, imploring her to appeal to the king and plead on behalf of her people:

"Do not imagine that you, of all Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king's palace. On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father's house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained

*Continued on page 6*

# Join Us for Our Community Passover Seder

*Wednesday, April 1, 2026*

*6:00 PM*

We invite you to join us as we gather to retell the story of liberation, share a festive meal, and celebrate the traditions that bring our community together.

Led by **Rabbi Shelly Kleinman**, our Seder will feature all the beloved rituals—yes, the plagues will be making an appearance—and, should he choose to visit, **Elijah** will be our honored guest.

This year's feast is lovingly prepared by CHI Sisterhood, ensuring a delicious and memorable evening for all.

## Tickets

Members (18 and older): \$40

Guests of Members: \$40

Non Members: \$50

## Payment & Deadline

Please make checks payable to CHI Sisterhood.  
Checks may be brought to Friday night Erev Shabbat Service or mailed to:

**Barbara Morgan**  
45 Almanzora Circle  
Hot Springs Village, AR 71909

*Deadline for ticket purchases: Wednesday, March 25, 2026*

Come for the matzah, stay for the storytelling, and enjoy an evening filled with meaning, music, and community.

## Our Esther Moment

*Continued from page 4*

to a royal position for just such a time as this.” (4:13–14)

Invoking the pull of peoplehood, Mordechai links Esther’s fate both to that of her imperiled contemporaries and ancestral roots. Her true identity will eventually come out, and not even her royal status will offer protection. Both she, and her father’s house, will be wiped out.

Esther knows that Mordechai knows that they both know, that but for the chance events of the prior chapters she would not be sitting on the royal throne. Who knows if it was not “for just such a time as this” that Esther arrived at her position? Now is the time for moral courage.

And for the first time in her life, Esther becomes the protagonist of her eponymous tale. She instructs Mordechai to assemble all the Jews to fast. In breach of protocol, and at great personal risk, she seeks an audience with the king. She may perish, but she will no longer keep her identity *nistar*, hidden. Esther has come out from the shadows as a Jew, a woman, and a queen, leaning into all three aspects of her being. A heroine for her time, a heroine for our time.

Esther’s persona stands as an enduring parable for Jewish identity. We see our story in the inchoate nature of her early Jewish self and the “bargain” she makes in entering secular society. Post Oct. 7, the scroll’s description of the precarious nature of diaspora existence with its haters, enablers and bystanders hits close to home. We feel for Esther as she squirms in her indecision. “Is this really my fight? I could lose so much – even my life?” Esther’s struggle is very much ours.

Esther risks it all for her people: power, prestige, and social acceptance. Esther didn’t choose her moment, it chose her — but when that moment arrived, she threw her lot in with her people.

And it is Esther to whom we turn for direction on what it means to be a Jew today. Esther risks it all for her people: power, prestige, and social acceptance. Esther didn’t choose her moment, it chose her — but when that moment arrived, she threw her lot in with her people. She leverages her station in life and is unapologetic about her roots and the right of her people to stand tall as citizens and Jews.

Most of all, Esther refuses to let her Judaism be

defined by the hatred of others. *Kiy’mu v’kiblu ha-yehudim*, “the Jews affirmed and accepted,” the text notes in a later chapter (9:27), a verse understood by the rabbis to signal a joyful and volitional acceptance of Jewish identity. Esther the person and Esther the book are important not merely because of what they teach about fighting Jew-hatred. They are important because they teach that Jew-haters do not get to define the Jewishness of Jews – Jews do.

Ours is an Esther moment. We too have made bargains with modernity; we too have assimilated into our host culture only to discover that we are not quite as at home as we thought we were. Who knows if it was not for just such a time as this that we arrived at our station? Some things are better not left to chance.

As did Esther, may we stand connected to our people, vigilant on behalf of their well-being and, most of all, living proud, joyful, and honorable Jewish lives.



*Queen Esther by Edwin Longsdan Long, 1878*

*Note: Elliot Cosgove is the Chief Rabbi of the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York*

# Jewish Trivia for March and April

## March

March 15, 1896: 63 Jewish Civil War veterans meet in New York City and established the Hebrew Union Veterans, an organization that continues today as Jewish War Veterans.

March 25, 1911: In the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, in New York City, 146 workers, mostly Jewish women, perished.

March 18, 1922: Judith Kaplan Eisenstein, first woman to become Bat Mitzvah

March 30, 1945: Major General Maurice Rose, the highest ranking Jewish officer in World War II is killed in Germany while on patrol.

March 17, 1969: Golda Meir is named Israeli Prime Minister.

## Deceased

March 23, 1964: Peter Lorre, actor

March 5, 1974: Sol Hurok, impresario

March 28, 1985: Marc Chagall, artist

March 3, 1987: Danny Kaye, actor

March 9, 1992: Menachim Begin, Israeli Prime Minister

March 9, 1996: George Burns, actor

March 23, 2011: Elizabeth Taylor, actress

March 12, 2012: Yehudi Menuhin, violinist

March 1, 2013: Bonnie Franklin, actress

March 15, 2014: David Brenner, comedian

## April

April 27, 1940: Auschwitz concentration camp is opened

April 19, 1943: Warsaw Ghetto uprising

April 12, 1951: Israeli Knesset establishes Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day

April 22, 1993: Holocaust Museum opens in Washington, D.C.

## Deceased

April 13, 1963: Yitchak Ben Zvi, Israel's second President

April 22, 1986: Irma Bombeck, writer

April 23, 1990: Paulette Goddard, actress

April 5, 1993: Molly Pican, Yiddish actress

April 23, 1995: Howard Kosell, sports announcer

April 25, 1995: Ginger Rogers, actress

April 25, 2009: Bea Arthur, actress

April 7, 2012: Mike Wallace, newscaster

April 6, 2014: Claire Berry, singer of Jewish folk songs

April 6, 2017: Don Rickles, comedian

## Refuah Shlemah

*The following people are in our thoughts and prayers for healing. Please offer prayers that they have a full and complete recovery.:*

- Aria Baron
- Shoshana Baron
- Adam Bierman
- Terri Carr
- Oded Grenman
- Sue Koppel
- Pat McCarthy
- Palma Ortiz
- Mike Richardson
- Lori Roslawski
- Steven West
- James Woodfork

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

### Anniversaries

David and Glenda Kirsch	March 27
Harold and Laura Castillo	April 28

### Birthdays

Michael Waxler	Mar 11
Oded Grenman	Mar 18
Phyllis Hearn	Mar 21
Barbara Morgan	Apr 4
Larry Levi	Apr 7
Rachel Gordon	Apr 16
Stuart Fleischner	Apr 22
Betty Kleinman	Apr 23
Cheryl Cohen	Apr 30

## Congregation House of Israel Board of Directors

**Rabbi Sheldon "Shelly" Kleinman**  
501-623-5821  
[skleinm2@gmail.com](mailto:skleinm2@gmail.com)

**Dennis Williams, President**  
870-230-3529  
[jwmensch1@gmail.com](mailto:jwmensch1@gmail.com)

**Glenda Kirsch, Secretary**  
832-368-7438  
[ghkirsch@hotmail.com](mailto:ghkirsch@hotmail.com)

**Laura Castillo, Sisterhood President**  
210-940-9044  
[beasilytx@gmail.com](mailto:beasilytx@gmail.com)

**Millie Baron, Treasurer**  
501-538-6619  
[millie487@hotmail.com](mailto:millie487@hotmail.com)

**Yossi Baron**  
501-655-1280  
[kimyossibaron@yahoo.com](mailto:kimyossibaron@yahoo.com)

**Sherrill Nicolosi**  
501-984-1517  
[sherrill@thevillagelawyer.com](mailto:sherrill@thevillagelawyer.com)

**Mark Fleischner**  
501-627-5441  
[hmfleischner@gmail.com](mailto:hmfleischner@gmail.com)

**Michael Richardsson, Past President**  
903-278-6453  
[maheegan@aol.com](mailto:maheegan@aol.com)



Please join us in celebrating  
**Congregation House of Israel's**  
**150th Anniversary**

**on Friday May 8th**

300 Quapaw Ave, Hot Springs, AR 71901

*6:00 pm*

Shabbat services to be held in the Sanctuary

*Reception to follow in Burgauer Hall*

For any additional questions, please contact: [info@hschi.org](mailto:info@hschi.org)

\*Sponsored by the Temple Sisterhood and the Rosenzweig Foundation for Interfaith Activities

We are very proud and excited to be celebrating the 150th anniversary of our congregation this year! Our Sisterhood is working very hard on a special Shabbat service for Friday, May 8th, and we hope that all of our members will be able to attend. You are also welcome to invite any friends, family members, or neighbors who might be interested in celebrating with us.

There are several prominent churches in our community that are also celebrating milestone anniversaries this year:

**St. Luke's Episcopal** (160 years)

**First Methodist** (164 years)

**First Presbyterian** (150 years)

**Grand Avenue Methodist** (101 years)

So in a spirit of community celebration we will also be inviting any of their members that would like to attend.

We are also working with the musical director from **B'nai Israel** in Little Rock to provide some very special music for our service.

It promises to be an exciting evening to see old friends, to meet new ones, and to enjoy a moving Shabbat in our beautiful sanctuary.

Please mark your calendars now and plan to join us!

## March - April Yahrzeits

### Kaddish Recited March 6

**William J. Brown**

*Uncle of Betty Forshberg*

**Herman Fleischner**

*Grandfather of Stuart Fleischner  
Grandfather of Mark Fleischner*

**Dorothy Robins Taub**

*Mother of Betty Feir*

### Kaddish Recited March 13

**Jules B. Newman**

*Grandfather of Brad Wolken*

**Murray H. Forshberg**

*Father-in-law of Betty Forshberg*

**Muriel Kathleen Gottlieb Harris**

*Mother of Barbara Morgan*

### Kaddish Recited March 20

**Wanda Burns**

*Mother of Glenda Kirsch*

**Julia C. Wigderson**

*Mother of Sue Koppel*

**Bernice Weisman Sherman**

*Aunt of Larry Levi*

**Ralph Edward Ballard**

*Grandfather of Laura Castillo*

**Shirley Clapman**

*Aunt of Sheldon Kleinman*

### Kaddish Recited March 27

**Bette Katz**

*Mother of Sheri Cobb*

**Walter Ballard Haynie**

*Brother of Laura Castillo*

### Kaddish Recited April 3

**Larry Wolken**

*Father of Brad Wolken*

**Larry Carrington**

*Son-in-law of Betty Forshberg*

**Sandra Rans**

*Sister-in-law of Fred Korngut*

**Roslyn Kirsch**

*Mother of David Kirsch*

**Darlene Smally**

*Mother of Kim Baron*

**Eva Brown**

*Mother of Betty Forshberg*

### Kaddish Recited April 10

**Nettie Gladner**

*Mother of Neal Gladner*

**Luman Sheets**

*Father of Mary Klompus*

**Craney Bellin**

*Mother of Ruth Sedler*

### Kaddish Recited April 17

**Lonnie Pederson**

*Nephew of Cheryl Cohen*

**Bernard Rephan**

*Father of Jerry Rephan*

**Sam Savel**

*Grandfather of Davud Cohen*

## March Parshiot

### **Ki Tisa**

#### **March 7**

When Moses does not return when expected from Mount Sinai, the people make a Golden Calf and worship it. G-d proposes to destroy the errant nation, but Moses intercedes on their behalf.

Moses descends from the mountain carrying the Tablets of the Testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; seeing the people dancing about their idol, he breaks the Tablets, destroys the Golden Calf and has the primary culprits put to death. He then returns to G-d to say: "If You do not forgive them, blot me out from the book that You have written.

### **Vayak'heil - Pekudei**

#### **March 14**

Moses assembles the people of Israel and reiterates to them the commandment to observe the Shabbat. He then conveys G-d's instructions regarding the making of the Mishkan (Tabernacle).

The people donate the required materials in abundance, bringing gold, silver, copper, blue, purple and red-dyed wool, goat hair, spun linen, animal skins, wood, olive oil, herbs and precious stones. Moses has to tell them to stop giving.

Moses makes an accounting of the gold, silver and copper donated by the people for the making of the Mishkan. Betzalel, Ahaliav and their assistants make the Eight Priestly Garments -- the Apron, Breastplate, Cloak, Crown, Hat, Tunic, Sash and Breeches -- according to the specifications communicated to Moses in the Parshah of Tetzaveh.

The Mishkan is completed and all its components are brought to Moses, who erects it and anoints it with the holy Anointing Oil, and initiates Aaron and his four sons into the priesthood. A cloud appears over the Mishkan, signifying the Divine Presence that has come to dwell within it.

### **Vayikra**

#### **March 21**

Moses makes an accounting of the gold, silver and copper donated by the people for the making of the Mishkan. Betzalel, Ahaliav and their assistants make the Eight Priestly Garments -- the Apron, Breastplate, Cloak, Crown, Hat, Tunic, Sash and Breeches -- according to the specifications communicated to Moses in the Parshah of Tetzaveh.

The Mishkan is completed and all its components are brought to Moses, who erects it and anoints it with the holy Anointing Oil, and initiates Aaron and his four sons into the priesthood. A cloud appears over the Mishkan, signifying the Divine Presence that has come to dwell within it.



### **Tzav**

#### **March 28**

G-d instructs Moses to command Aaron and his sons regarding their duties and rights as kohanim ("priests") who offer the korbanot (animal and meal offerings) in the Sanctuary.

The fire on the Altar must be kept burning at all times. In it are burned the wholly consumed ascending offering; veins of fat from the peace, sin and guilt offerings; and the "handful" separated from the meal offering. The kohanim eat the meat of the sin and guilt offerings, and the remainder of the meal offering.

The peace offering is eaten by the one who brought it, except for specified portions given to the kohen. The holy meat of the offerings must be eaten by ritually pure persons, in their designated holy place and within their specified time.

Aaron and his sons remain within the Sanctuary compound for seven days, during which Moses initiates them into the priesthood.

## April Parshiot

### (Pesach)

April 2 - 9)

### Shemini

April 11

Aaron and his sons begin to officiate as Kohanim (priests); a fire issues forth from G-d to consume the offerings on the Altar and the Divine Presence comes to dwell in the Sanctuary.

Aaron's two elder sons, Nadav and Avihu, offer a "strange fire before G-d, which He commanded them not" and die before G-d. Aaron is silent in face of his tragedy.

G-d commands the kosher laws, identifying the animal species permissible and forbidden for consumption.

### Tazria/M'tzora

April 18

The Parshahs of Tazria and Metzora continue the discussion of the laws of tumah v'taharah, ritual impurity and purity.

Tzaraat (often mistranslated as "leprosy") is a supra-natural plague, which can afflict people as well as garments or homes. If white or pink patches appear on a person's skin (dark pink or dark green in garments or homes), a kohen is summoned. Judging by various signs, such as an increase in size of the afflicted area after a seven-day quarantine, the kohen pronounces it tamei (impure) or tahor (pure).

A person afflicted with tzaraat must dwell alone outside of the camp (or city) until he is healed. The afflicted area in a garment or home must be removed; if the tzaraat recurs, the entire garment or home must be destroyed.

When the metzora ("leper") heals, he or she is purified by the kohen with a special procedure involving two birds, spring water in an earthen vessel, a piece of cedar wood, a scarlet thread and a bundle of hyssop.

### Acharaei - Kedoshim

April 25

Following the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, G d warns against unauthorized entry "into the holy." Only one person, the kohen gadol ("high priest"), may—but once a year, on Yom Kippur—enter the innermost chamber in the Sanctuary to offer the sacred ketoret to G d.

The Parshah of Acharei also warns against bringing korbanot (animal or meal offerings) anywhere but in the Holy Temple, forbids the consumption of blood, and details the laws prohibiting incest and other deviant sexual relations.



The Parshah of Kedoshim begins with the statement: "You shall be holy, for I, the L rd your G d, am holy." This is followed by dozens of mitzvot (divine commandments) through which the Jew sanctifies him- or herself and relates to the holiness of G d.