



## DIVREI MENACHEM

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### Like a Dove Returning to Her Nest

So, the ever-so-long waiting period is over. Baruch Hashem, the baby is born! And at that precise moment, our Parsha informs us, the ecstatic mother is unclean! The mother undergoes a period of purification and then – “she shall bring a lamb...for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon...for a sin offering” (Vayikra 12: 1-6).

We understand that the happy mother brings a burnt offering, which represents a tribute to God. She has been a participant in the most sublime of events on this planet, the creation of human life. She thus expresses her gratification to Hashem for delivering her from her pain (Abarbanel).

Why, however, when the mother fulfilled one of the most meaningful mitzvot – indeed, the first heavenly command – should she bring a sin offering? This sacrifice, after all, was a means of atonement for an unintentional transgression of a prohibition. The very act of bringing the sacrifice implied that the mother had brought guilt upon herself.

But of what iniquity is she guilty? Woefully, it has been suggested that in her pain at childbirth, the mother inadvertently cursed her husband or thought she would

never want to give birth again. God forbid, she may even have entertained negative thoughts about Hakadosh Baruch Hu in her moments of giving birth.

Nechama Leibovitch incisively explained why the woman brought a dove to the Sanctuary: The homesick dove flies above and comes looking for her nest. Likewise, having been deprived of visiting the Beit Hamikdash, the new mother now longs to return to her spiritual home.

The mother is now overwhelmed. In the spirit of R. Levi, cited in the Midrash, she has suddenly become aware that, in private, she was the depository of a minute “fetid drop.” Now, she is humbly cognizant that the Almighty transformed that drop into a healthy human being in public in all its majesty. The embryo was hidden in the womb; now, wondrously, the newborn is on show for all to see.

To cite Nechama Leibovitch, at the point of birth, the mother is suddenly aware of her utter insignificance before the awe-inspiring majesty of her Maker. Like the prophet Yeshayahu, she now proclaims, “Woe is me for I am undone...for my eyes have seen the King, Lord of Hosts” (6:1). Thus, through her sin-offering, the humbled mother “returns” to Hashem’s outstretched and welcoming hands. ■

Shabbat Shalom! Menachem Persoff