

## **Birth Balance (Tazria-Metzorah)**

*Every child begins the world anew. – Henry David Thoreau*

Several East Asian countries, including China, have long had a cultural preference for male children. In China, this preference was magnified in recent decades by the now-repealed "one-child policy," which generally limited families to having only one child.

This pressure contributed to a significant gender imbalance. According to China's 2020 census, the national ratio was approximately 111 boys for every 100 girls – lower than previous decades but still notably higher than the global average of around 105 boys for every 100 girls. Experts attribute much of this imbalance to sex-selective practices, including selective abortion.

Interestingly, ancient Jewish teachings touch on the topic of factors influencing the gender of offspring. Leviticus 12:2 discusses the birth of a male child:

"If a woman conceives and gives birth to a male..." (Leviticus 12:2)

Rabbi Ovadia Sforno, a 16th-century scholar and physician, cites a teaching from the Talmud (Niddah 31a), explaining:

"If a woman emits seed first, she bears a male."

Sforno elaborates that the timing of reproductive processes between partners may influence the resulting gender. In modern scientific terms, this idea aligns with research suggesting that the timing of ovulation affects the pH environment of the reproductive tract, which can favor either X (female) or Y (male) chromosome-bearing sperm. Earlier ovulation may create an alkaline environment that better preserves Y-chromosome sperm, potentially increasing the chances of having a boy. Later ovulation may favor the X chromosome, leading to a higher likelihood of a girl.

While these influences are subtle and not guarantees, it is fascinating to observe how ancient wisdom anticipated some aspects of biological science.

Rather than resorting to harmful practices that affect the natural balance of life, embracing natural methods and, more importantly, valuing every child – regardless of gender – offers a healthier and more compassionate path forward.

May all parents cherish their children, sons and daughters alike, and see blessing and continuity in future generations.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

*Dedication*

*To the marriage of Elana Gertel and Avi Schwartz. Mazal Tov!*