

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON KI TISAH - 5760

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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand ryfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand
on Parshas Ki Sisa

"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Ki Sisa -

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi
Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly
portion: Tape # 46, Dealing with Illness on Shabbos. Good Shabbos!

Leave The Worrying To -- Avinu BaShamayim [Our Father In
Heaven]

The pasuk [verse] at the end of the parsha says, "Three times in the
year all males should appear before the Master, Hashem, G-d of Israel"
[Shmos 34:23]. This is the source of the obligation to be "Oleh Regel" --
to go up to the Beis HaMikdash [Temple] in Yerushalayim [Jerusalem]
-- on Pesach, Shavuot, and Succos. The next pasuk continues, "...no man
will covet your land when you go up to appear before Hashem, your G-d,
three times a year" [34:24].

The simple interpretation of these pasukim [verses] is that the
primary thrust of the command is to be "Oleh Regel". As a secondary
point, the Torah informs us that while one is away from home
performing this mitzvah, there is no need to fear that someone will covet
the land.

However, there is also a deeper message. The Talmud says that one
who does not own land in Eretz Yisroel [the Land of Israel] is exempt
from the command of making the Festival Pilgrimage [Pesachim 8b]. We
cannot apply the pasuk "no man will covet your land" to such a person.

This seems grossly unfair. Why should someone be exempt from
"being seen by HaShem [G-d]" (mitzvas Re'iyah) just because he does
not own real estate? Is the Torah discriminating against the poor? What
is the connection between going up three times a year and owning land?

Furthermore, the pasuk uses a strange expression: "Three times in the
year, all males should appear before the Master (haAdon), Hashem..."
The phrase "Adon Hashem" is a very uncommon expression. In fact, the
only other place in Chumash where this expression is used is in Parshas
Mishpatim [23:17], again in connection with this same mitzvah of going
up to Yerushalayim on the Festivals.

The Sforno in Parshas Mishpatim says that the use of the word
"Adon" alludes to the fact that HaShem is also the Master of the Land, as
it is written "For all the Land belongs to Me" [Shmos 19:5]. In other
words, in the final analysis, the Ribbono shel Olam [Master of the
World] owns everything.

Through this Sforno, we can understand a new insight into the
mitzvah of Aliyah l'regel, going up to Jerusalem on the holidays. The
mitzvah is not merely to go up to Yerushalayim and have a Yom Tov in
the presence of and under the influence of the Beis Hamikdash, the
Temple. The purpose of the mitzvah is to emphasize that I can leave my
house, my land and my property unattended and not worry about them.
Why can I do that? Because, ultimately, they are not mine. I should
worry about this land? It is not mine to worry about -- it is HaShem's
land. He will worry about it. He will take care of it.

When a person returns a rental car, he merely drives up to the return
stand, drops off the keys and drives away. Does he need to worry about
what will happen to the car? Avis worries about that! It is not your car. It
is their car.

So too, when the Jewish people go to Yerushalayim for the Festivals,
not worrying about the land is a means of testifying that HaShem is the
Master of the Land, and He will take care of it.

B'S'D' Consequently, one who does not have land, can not participate in this
mitzvah, because he cannot demonstrate this confidence in HaShem's
ownership of the land through his traveling to Yerushalayim.

The Torah emphasizes this same concept through the Mitzvah of
Shmita, the Mitzvah of Yovel, and other Mitzvos. All teach the same
lesson -- we are not the "baale-bos". A person's beautiful home, on top of
the hill, is not really his, because 'All the Land belongs to Me'.

Others Won't Covet Our Land If They Recognize That Our Land Is
Special

Why will we not have to worry that our land and property will be
taken while we are away? On a simple level, we understand that
HaShem, in fact, performs a miracle. The reason why no one will covet
our land is because HaShem will miraculously see to it that such
coveting will not take place during this time.

However, the Mikdash Mordechai suggests that perhaps this
phenomenon is not a miracle. So how else can we explain this
guarantee? How can HaShem provide such an assurance without a
miracle? The Mikdash Mordechai explains how such an assurance can be
made without a miracle, based on an Ibn Ezra.

The Ibn Ezra teaches a principle in Chumash on the pasuk in the
Aseres HaDibros [Ten Commandments] "Thou Shalt Not Covet" [Shmos
20:14]. Everyone asks, 'How can the Torah legislate emotions?'. How
can the Torah tell me not to be jealous if, in fact, I am jealous?

The Ibn Ezra explains that the reason why a person is jealous of his
neighbor's house or his neighbor's car or his neighbor's wife is because
he believes that he is really entitled to that house or car or wife. The Ibn
Ezra points out that the villager does not desire the daughter of the King.
He has no expectation to marry into the royal family and consequently
does not think about taking the King's daughter for his wife. We do not
covet the Crown Jewels of England. That is out of our league.

This, says the Ibn Ezra, is what the Torah expects from us regarding
the commandment of "Do Not Covet". When we see someone else's car
or house, we should tell ourselves -- "I have no relationship to that". Just
like I do not covet the Crown Jewels, I do not covet my neighbor's
house. It is his house. He needs it. HaShem gave it to him. I have no
relationship to it.

The Mikdash Mordechai explains that this too is the reason why the
pasuk says 'no man will covet your land'. If we go up on the Festival, and
fulfill the mitzvos with all their implications, then we will reach this
wonderful level that we as Jews will understand that all the Land (and
everything in it) belongs to HaShem. We are not the owners. We accept
however HaShem chooses to distribute His property.

If we reach that wonderful level, other nations will not desire our
land either, because they will look at us and recognize that we are
special. They will recognize that our land is, in fact, special -- that our
land is not like their land and that they can never hope to have a claim on
our land, any more than we can have a claim to the Crown Jewels. By
reaching the high spiritual level attained by spending the Festival under
the influence of the Beis Hamikdash, we are putting ourselves in a
different league and consequently "no man will covet our land".

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash

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Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash Project (Vbm)

"YOU WILL SEE MY BACK; BUT MY FACE MUST NOT BE SEEN"

GUEST SICHA BY RAV YA'AKOV MEDAN

Summarized by Matan Glidai Translated by David Silverberg

Two verses in our parasha seem to contradict one another. On the one hand, "God would speak to Moshe face to face, as one man speaks to another" (33:11). Yet, God Himself tells Moshe, "BYou will see My back; but My face must not be seen" (33:23). Did Moshe merit face-to-face communication or not?

The answer, however, is clear. The first verse relates to the period when Moshe had relocated his tent outside the Israelite camp, away from the nation, in the aftermath of the sin of the Golden Calf. At that point, God spoke to him face to face (so to speak). The second verse, however, describes the situation after Moshe returned to the nation. The people's spiritual level had declined with the incident of the Golden Calf, and, accordingly, Moshe's prophetic level decreased when he rejoined the camp.

In Parashat Beha'alotekha, God describes the superior quality of Moshe's prophecy: "With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly [be-mar'eh] and not in riddles" (Bemidbar 12:8). This image clearly corresponds to the first verse cited above and thus refers to the situation prior to the Golden Calf. After the sin, Moshe's prophecies resembled those of other prophets, of which God says, "I make Myself known to him in a vision [be-mar'a]" (ibid., verse 6). The prophetic quality before the sin is called "mar'eh," whereas after the sin it becomes "mar'a," literally, a mirror. A mirror absorbs some of the rays of light, and the resulting image is thus of inferior quality. Chazal described the difference between these two levels of prophecy with the terms "aspaklaria ha-me'ira" and "aspaklaria she-eina me'ira."

Herein, then, lies the distinction between looking at God "face to face" and seeing only His "back." The view of the back is obscured, the clarity diminished.

What is the meaning and significance of this distinction?

In describing these two prophetic visions, Chazal employ the image of tefillin. They liken the prophetic vision of "face to face" to the viewing of the tefillin proper, while the view "from the back" they compare to the sight of the knot of the tefillin (worn on the back of one's neck). However, we may gain a clearer understanding through a comparison to the "tzitz" - head plate - worn by the Kohen Gadol. When viewing the High Priest from the front, one sees a golden strip with the inscription, "Kodesh La-Hashem" ("Sacred to God"). A rear view reveals the string of "tekhelet" (bluish dye) that held the "tzitz" around the Kohen Gadol's forehead. The Gemara (Menachot 43b) explains the significance of "tekhelet." This shade of blue resembles the color of the ocean, which itself brings to mind the color of the sky, which is similar to Heavenly Throne. Thus, one who looks straight at the Kohen Gadol beholds the Divine Name, whereas one looking from behind must employ his imagination and behold the Almighty only through the process indirect association.

Similarly, herein lies the distinction between Benei Yisrael's situation before the Golden Calf and after. The nation had earned a direct revelation of the Shekhina in its most natural form, which required no exertion on their part. After the sin, they merited the revelation only through hard work and concentrated effort.

The Midrash (Shir Hashirim Rabba 1:12) recounts that Benei Yisrael slept on the morning of Matan Torah, and the Almighty had to wake them. (In commemoration, we have the custom of remaining awake all night long on Shavuot engaged in Torah study.) This passage in the Midrash underscores the passivity that marked Am Yisrael's experience at Mount Sinai; they slept and God reached out to

them. After the sin, however, we must search for God: "And I will return to My abode - until they realize their guilt. In their distress, they will seek Me and beg for My favor" (Hoshea 5:15). The depiction in Shir Ha-shirim of the maiden searching out her beloved who hides accurately depicts this concept.

Nowadays, we stay awake all night long on Shavuot, rather than sleeping and waiting for the Almighty to awaken us. Similarly, the kohen Gadol would remain awake the entire night before Yom Kippur in preparation for his encounter with God the following day. Indeed, this encounter takes place in the Kodosh Ha-kodashim, where God appears in the cloud of the incense - in a clouded, obscured revelation. This type of revelation requires active effort and preparation, as opposed the direct revelation at Sinai, which could be attained passively.

This may also mark the distinction between the first and second sets of tablets. The Ramban explains that the first tablets contained the Ten Commandments as recorded in Parashat Yitro, while the second tablets featured the commandments as they appear in Parashat Vaetchanan. The two sets of commandments differ significantly from one another, particularly in their presentation of the mitzva of Shabbat. It stands to reason that Moshe repeats the mitzva of Shabbat when introducing the Mishkan to Benei Yisrael (at the beginning of Parashat Vayakhel) because the content of this commandment underwent a certain change with Moshe's receiving the second tablets. In Parashat Yitro, God bases the institution of Shabbat on the fact that "in six days God made heaven and earth and sea and He rested on the seventh day" (20:11). The Vaetchanan version, however, presents a different reason for Shabbat: "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the day of Shabbat" (Devarim 5:15). In the first Tablets, the individual need not expend any effort to understand the mitzva of Shabbat. He sees God and imitates Him - just as the Almighty "rested" on the seventh day, so do we. In the second Tablets, by contrast, one cannot readily behold God. To appreciate this mitzva, then, one must recall the Egyptian bondage and thereby contemplate the meaning of Shabbat.

An additional discrepancy between the two different sets of Tablets relates to their manufacture. The first tablets were produced by God Himself. Presumably, they were not chiseled; God simply took two prefabricated slabs and engraved the commandments thereupon. In the situation prior to the Golden Calf, the natural order was complete and God revealed Himself therein. One saw Him without searching and discovered Him without effort. In such circumstances, God could take a primitive, undeveloped object from the natural world and inscribe upon it the Divine Word. The second tablets, as we know, were manufactured by Moshe. It seems that God did not even instruct Moshe how to make them; he worked independently. The writing was not engraved upon the tablets, but rather written on them. By this point God was not directly revealed through nature, and, consequently, one needed to perfect nature to see Him.

The significance of brit mila - circumcision - also relates to this idea. Adam was "born" circumcised; nature needed no further processing or development. One may even suggest that Adam had a foreskin, but it constituted no problem whatsoever. Nature was perfect and did not call out for any form of correction or improvement. Rabbi Akiva's celebrated remark that "the work of humans is superior to that of the Almighty," as evidenced by the superior quality of bread over wheat (Tanchuma Tazria, 5), likely refers specifically to the aftermath of Adam's sin. In fact, Adam did not need to bake any bread; he plucked fruits straight from the tree and ate. Only after the sin did he fall under the decree, "By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat," at which point he needed to perfect nature, to turn the wheat into loaves of bread through the painstaking

processes of agriculture and baking. Nature was no longer perfect.

Only when Am Yisrael experiences difficult times does the Almighty reveal Himself to them and dwell among them. During times of oppression, Benei Yisrael take the ark with them to battle, symbolizing the accompaniment of God's Presence. In such situations, one needs not labor to find the Almighty: "Since the Lord your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you" (Devarim 23:15).

(Originally delivered on Leil Shabbat Parashat Ki-Tisa, 5755 [1995].)

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From: RABBI LIPMAN PODOLSKY [SMTP:podolsky@hakotel.edu]
BEAUTIFULLY MODEST

Who doesn't like to succeed? Our every endeavor is accompanied by a deep desire to achieve. Every attempt is preceded by a stated goal, and a concrete plan to reach that goal. Still, though, our attempt is often thwarted by one thing or another. How can we bolster our chances for success? Our parsha tells us how.

The Torah was given on Shavuot. It was a fantastic, unprecedented display of Divine Revelation. So much so, that the Haggada declares: If He had only brought us to Mount Sinai, but not given us the Torah, that would have been sufficient reason to thank Him (Dayeinu!).

At first glance, this statement makes no sense! Of what benefit is coming to Mount Sinai only to leave empty-handed? The answer is, the Revelation itself was so powerful, so real, that it left an indelible impression upon our collective soul. No other event ever came close to the effect rendered at Sinai.

Yet, it didn't last. A bare forty days after the Revelation the Jews made a fatal misstep. By creating and worshiping a golden calf, the Jews lost the Torah, symbolized by the breaking of the tablets of stone. They had sunk so low, that they would have been instantly decimated if not for the personal intervention of Moshe, their leader. Their repentance was accepted.

Still, the Torah they were meant to receive lay in a broken heap at the foot of the mountain. To renew the bond with their Creator, the people would have to re-accept the Torah.

What could they do to insure that the second acceptance would not be just a repeat performance of the first? How could they learn from their past mistake?

Regarding the second acceptance, the Torah writes: "No man may ascend with you nor may anyone be seen on the entire mountain... (Shmos 34:3)." Why was this necessary?

Comments Rashi: "The first [tablets], since they were [given] amidst tumult and thunderings and assemblies, the evil eye had dominion over them. There is nothing more beautiful than modesty." Thus the second tablets were given on Yom Kippur, a day of solemn, quiet contemplation. And this time it worked.

We want our marriage to succeed, our children to grow into healthy, contributing members of the Jewish people, our business dealings to flourish, etc. Espouse the ideal of modesty. There is nothing more beautiful.

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FROM: RABBI RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM LIST
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Shabbat Shalom: Ki Tisa by Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel-- To count or not to count is not the question, but how to count!

At first glance, one of the more curious laws in the Torah is the prohibition to count Jews. The Talmud records: "R. Elazar said, 'Whoever counts an Israelite, transgresses a [single] prohibition,' as it written 'And the number of the children are as the sand of the sea which cannot be measured (Hosea 2:1). R. Nahman b. Isaac says, he transgresses two prohibitions, as the verse concludes, 'and cannot be counted' (B.T. Yoma 22b).

Given this, how are we to understand the opening of our portion of Ki Tisa where G-d commands Moses to count the Israelites: "When you take the sum of the children of Israel after their number each one shall be counted by giving an atonement offering for his life. In this manner, they will not be stricken by the plague when they are counted. Everyone included in the census must include a half shekel." [Ex. 30:12-13]

Count, but not by counting heads, but rather by counting the half-shekel coins which every Israelite was commanded to bring. But isn't this actually a subterfuge, a kind of legal fiction. Moreover, what is the significance of a half-shekel? If you're using coins, would a whole shekel not better represent the "whole" person?

Third --how are we to understand the words 'Ki Tisa?' The Hebrew root implies 'lifting up.' Rashi, citing Targum Onkelos, informs us that it means to obtain, or to receive, which is how most translations treat the word: "When you take sum of the children of Israel...." The Psikta Rabati (11) picks up on the idea of 'lifting' but goes one step further; more than to lift, 'ki tisa' is about uplifting, not just to raise but to exalt. And in this count of count, we are exalting not only Israel, but also the G-d of Israel. "In whatever manner you can uplift this nation, uplift. For it says, 'Ki Tisa Et Rosh Bnai Yisrael [When you lift up the head] And there is no head of the head of the Jewish people except for G-d."

Perhaps a fascinating Talmudic discussion between the two religio-political parties of the second commonwealth, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, will help us understand the importance of a census in the first place. Everyone agrees that we are forbidden to mourn during the first week of the month of Nisan because this marked the original establishment of the Tamid, the Daily Sacrifice, in the Temple, but they disagree as to how the Daily Sacrifice should be funded. The Sadducees, who represented the aristocracy, believed that specific donors could, of their own free will, defray the cost of the Daily offering, while the Pharisees insisted that the universal half-shekel payments be used for these offerings (B.T. Menachot 65a). Apparently the Pharisees, forerunners of Rabbinic Judaism which gave us the Talmud wanted the Daily Offering to remain a national enterprise, a gift to G-d from every single Jew. And the only way to guarantee its 'democratic' spirit would be to insist on equal contributions, where the Rothschilds and Tevyes had equal input, "the rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half-a-shekel" (Ex 30:15).

This idea is implicitly discussed and further illuminated in the Jerusalem Talmud where we find the Rabbis debating the reason for the Torah's choice of the half-shekel in our portion. R. Yehuda explains that "...since they sinned at half-day [the celebration of the golden calf began at mid-day] they had to give a half-shekel...." R. Pinchas, in the name of R. Levi, attributes it to the selling of Joseph. "Since the brothers sold the first son of Rachel, Joseph, for 20 silver pieces - and with Benjamin being too young and Joseph not being a recipient, each of the ten brothers received one-half shekel" [J.T. Shekalim, Ch. 2. Hal. 3]

I'd like to suggest that both of these opinions are two sides of the same coin: both idolatry and sibling rivalry reflect a world in which the value of national unity and togetherness is of paltry significance.

Idolatry results from feeling impotent in a world controlled by external and irrational forces which we humans can at best "bribe", but can never work with in partnership. And the sale or expulsion from the family, of Joseph expressed the view that one segment of a nation has the right to destroy, banish, or de-legitimize other segments of the nation with whom they ideologically disagree and over whom they can exercise

political or physical control.

The half-shekel census for the daily Temple Sacrifice is a specific remedy for national feelings of internal fractiousness and ultimate impotence. The very taking of a census affirms national pride and self confidence, asserts the importance of every individual member as contributing to the whole.

And why a half-shekel? Simply stated, we are being taught that every Jew is incomplete without every other Jew. Every Jew must be brought closer, not pushed away further. The whole is comprised of the sum of its parts, and every part is unassailably precious.

A story is told about two chassidic masters who had spent their youth studying together in a yeshiva and sharing together every imaginable adventure and crisis. Upon going their separate ways, they exchanged photos by which to remember each other. But one of the young men took the photo of himself and tore it in half, and then he tore the photo of his friend in half as well. It's not enough, he explained, to remember the other; it is far more important to always remember that without the other each of us is only half a person, an incomplete specimen.

But, if then the half-shekel contribution is such a laudatory act, a symbol of Jewish national strength and unity, why should the Torah consider it a sin to count Jews? Indeed, the very taste of the nation seems to be in the counting!

To answer this question, and to deepen our entire attitude towards the census, we must interpret the Midrashic image in the name of R. Meir: G-d removed a coin of fire from under his Throne of Glory and He showed it to Moses, saying, 'This [zeh] is what they shall give' " (Midrash Tanhuma 9). How are we to understand this coin of fire? Did not Moses know what a half-shekel coin looked like? Fire symbolizes the spirit of G-d which resides within the nation Israel, the nation forged and formed by the Divine Voice at Sinai and best described as a burning bush (sne, sinai) which is never consumed by the inspiring sparkes and flames of fervor which emerge from its depth; much the opposite, it is that very fire which provides the fuel for Israel's eternity.

>From this perspective, the whole is not merely comprised of each of its parts; the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The whole is not only the Jewish nation; it is also the G-d who resides in our nation, the very G-d who is uplifted together with His people when each of them is counted - and when it is thereby understood that every Jew counts! And the whole is not merely the Jewish nations today it is also the Jewish nation of yesterday and tomorrow. It is not only Klal Yisrael, the entire nation; it is also Knesset Yisrael, historic and eternal Israel. Yes, the nation as a united whole is significant - but that is only part of the story. The children of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs and the parents of the messiah must always include their forbears as well as their progeny in a total assessment of where we stand and what we stand for.

And this 'eternal' aspect of our existence is really the reason why we do not count Jews. We don't count because we can't count. Since the Jewish people are an eternal people, all those Jews who lived before us, and all those Jews who haven't even been born yet, are part of our nation, part of 'knesset Yisrael.' In the words of my teacher and mentor, Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the daily sacrifice is not an offering of partnership (Korban Shutfut), but it is rather an offering of historic community (Korban Tzibbur) . And if Israel includes within it the metaphysical idea of an historic nation, how can we ever count eternity.

Shabbat Shalom

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at:
<http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm> Ohr Torah Stone
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Rabbi Shlomo Riskin will be speaking on behalf of Israel Bonds this Motzei Shabbat Feb. 26 7:30 PM at Keter Torah in Teaneck on "The Challenge of Israel to the Diaspora Jew" (Contact Robert Katz for more information.)

From: Shlomo Katz[SMTP:skatz@torah.org]

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz Ki Tisah

Our parshah opens: "When you raise the heads of Bnei Yisrael according to their numbers, every man shall give an atonement for his soul when counting them . . . a half shekel[.]" Why, asks R' Moshe Feinstein z"l, was the command to take a census phrased as "raising the heads of Bnei Yisrael"? He explains:

If you ask a typical person why he does not study more Torah or do more mitzvot, he will answer, "Who am I? I'm not capable of being a Torah scholar or a tzaddik." To counter this inappropriate feeling of humility, to "raise the heads of Bnei Yisrael," Hashem said that every person should give exactly one half of a shekel, no more and no less, toward the census. In this way, each person will realize that he is on par (at least potentially) with the greatest scholar and the greatest tzaddik. All that one needs is determination and effort.

There is another lesson in these words. The gemara (Bava Batra 10b) asks, "How will the honor of Israel be uplifted? Through 'Ki tisah/When you raise'." Commentaries explain that the gemara is actually referring to the end of the verse, which alludes to the mitzvah of tzedakah/charity. Why, then, did the gemara quote the beginning of the verse? R' Feinstein explains that it is not enough to give charity. Rather, the honor of the Jewish people is uplifted when we are able to "raise our heads," i.e., to hold our heads high after giving tzedakah. This depends on how we give tzedakah - for example, whether we give an honorable amount in relation to our means and whether we give it with the right attitude instead of begrudgingly. (Darash Moshe)

Understanding the Golden Calf

How could the generation which witnessed the Ten Plagues and received the Torah make a Golden Calf? In a lecture delivered this week in 5733/1973, R' Yaakov Yitzchak Halevi Ruderman z"l (see page 4) answered this question as follows:

The midrash says: "It was good that our ancestors said, 'Na'aseh ve'nishmah.' Was it good that they said [about the Calf (Shemot 32:4)], 'Aileh/These are your gods, Israel?'" It would seem, observed R' Ruderman, that making the Calf was more than just wrong. In some respect, the making of the Calf stood in particular contrast to Bnei Yisrael's calling out "Na'aseh ve'nishmah."

A similar contrast is highlighted by the gemara (Berachot 32b) in interpreting the verse (Yishayah 49:15), "Can a woman forget her baby, or not feel compassion for the child of her womb? Even 'aileh/these may forget, but 'Anochi/I would not forget you." The gemara says (as if quoting Hashem), "I will forget the sin of 'Aileh/These [are your gods, Israel],' but I will never forget that you accepted the Torah [beginning with 'Anochi/I am Hashem'] at Sinai." How does the making of the Calf stand in contrast to Bnei Yisrael's acceptance of the Torah?

Two introductory points are necessary. First: Ramban, Kuzari and other early commentaries explain that only a small part of the nation viewed the Golden Calf as an idol. Most of the Jewish people were seeking only an intermediary who would represent G-d's presence on earth. This was the role in which the people had seen Moshe before his "disappearance" on Har Sinai. The prophet Yechezkel teaches that Hashem's "Throne" is adorned with four images: the face of a man, the face of an ox, the face of an eagle and the face of a lion. Thus, when the people thought that Moshe had been taken from them, they thought it would be permitted to make one of the other images on G-d's "Throne"

as a reminder of G-d's presence.

Second: what was the significance of the statement, "Na'aseh ve'nishmah"/ "We will do and we will hear"? It meant that, unlike the nations that refused to accept the Torah without knowing its contents, Bnei Yisrael accepted the Torah wholeheartedly and unconditionally. It was equivalent to saying, "We have no thoughts or concerns except for the Torah. There is no room in our hearts or in our world for anything but Hashem and His Torah."

Bnei Yisrael attained a very high level by saying "Na'aseh ve'nishmah." Measure-for-measure, just as Bnei Yisrael declared that no part of their hearts, minds and beings would be devoid of Hashem's Torah, so Hashem was prepared to leave no part of the world devoid of His presence. But, by saying, "Na'aseh ve'nishmah," Bnei Yisrael set a high standard that they had to live up to. Thereafter, it was inappropriate for Bnei Yisrael to seek an intermediary to "represent" G-d; He was already as close to them as could be!

R' Ruderman concluded: from the above explanation we can learn an important lesson about how to study Tanach. We read in Tanach about the sins of great people (e.g., King David with Batsheva), and we wonder how they could commit sins that few of us would commit. Now we know, however, that when a great person slips and does not live up to the high standard that he has set for himself, the Torah judges him very harshly. As we have seen, because Bnei Yisrael failed to realize Hashem's closeness to them, it is considered as if they committed idolatry. On our lowly level, Bnei Yisrael's failing would not be considered a sin at all! Similarly, because King David's sin, as subtle as it really was, was beneath him, the prophet describes the incident as if King David committed adultery. (Sichot Halevi p. 94)

The gemara (Berachot 32a) says: "Moshe spoke forcefully to Hashem. He said, 'It was the gold and the silver that You gave Bnei Yisrael that led them to make the Calf!'"

R' Yaakov Moshe Lessin z"l (mashgiach ruchani at Yeshivat Rabbenu Yitzchak Elchanan/Yeshiva University after 1939) explains: One who wants to become a complete person must know that the Torah's expectations cannot be measured with the same "ruler" that we use in our every day affairs. Rather, the Torah's expectations are far loftier than our thoughts can grasp. Thus, when Moshe said, "It was the gold and the silver that You gave Bnei Yisrael that led them to make the Calf," he was expressing a very subtle point. Indeed, the sin of the Golden Calf was so subtle that the early commentaries struggle to pinpoint exactly what it was. Similarly, we are taught, the angels asked Hashem, "Why did you decree that man should die?" Notwithstanding the simplistic way in which Adam and Chava's sin is told in the Torah, the sin was in fact so minute and so subtle that the angels did not know what it was.

Chazal teach that even the Jews' maidservants experienced a greater revelation at the splitting of the Yam Suf/Red Sea than the prophet Yechezkel experienced at the height of his career. Nevertheless, man's nature is such that if he stops focusing even for a moment on his spiritual and intellectual pursuits, he can quickly develop a small, but dark, stain on his soul which can later spread. Thus it was possible that only hours after the great revelation at the Sea, Bnei Yisrael were so drawn to the booty that washed out of the Yam Suf that they refused to leave and travel on to Har Sinai (see Rashi to Shemot 15:22).

This was Moshe's complaint to Hashem: The stain on their souls that allowed them to make the Golden Calf developed from that time at the Sea when You gave them gold and silver. Those riches distracted them from their spiritual pursuits long enough that a Golden Calf became possible. (Ha'maor She'ba'Torah Vol. I, p. 173) ...

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THE WEEKLY HAFTORA BY RAV YEHUDA SHAVIV
Haftora for Parashat Ki Tisa The Battle of Each Generation with Idolatry
(Melakhim I 18:1-39, Sefardim 20-39)

a. Style of Biblical Text The extra pesukim added at the start of the haftora according to Ashkenazi custom would seem to be aimed at providing background for the vision at Carmel, like the haftora to parashat Shelach where several pesukim are likewise added in the Ashkenazi custom in order to provide background.

But the addition also holds an important lesson. The text describes Ovadia, who "feared God greatly" (18:3). Ovadia bravely hid one hundred prophets in a cave, giving them bread and water to keep them alive in the face of the reign of terror by Izevel, who wished to annihilate all prophets of God. Eliyahu is aware of this act, for Ovadia reminds him: "Was my master not told of what I did when Izevel had the prophets of God killed, and I hid a hundred men of the prophets of God... and gave them bread and water" (18:13). Despite this, Eliyahu declares in public, "I ALONE remain a prophet of God" (18:22), and even to God he declares later on (after the end of the haftora), "Your prophets they killed by the sword, and I alone remain" (19:10). How is it possible that a prophet of truth, declaring the word of God and standing before Him, should utter such an inaccuracy?

We are forced to conclude that the text here - Eliyahu himself - adopts an exaggerated style, such that the prophet claims that he alone is left, although there are a hundred other prophets. And on the basis of this conclusion, perhaps we can apply a similar stylistic interpretation for what we are told concerning the episode of the golden calf in the parasha. From the description in the text, it appears as though just about the whole nation participates in the worship of this idol. But a careful examination reveals that only a few thousand people were involved, and this is indeed a small proportion of the entire nation. But the problem is the state of the nation as a whole - for even if they are not all involved in idolatry, they are not wholehearted in their service of God; they are "dithering between two options" (18:21). Most of the haftora describes the battle for the soul of the nation, the soul of the "silent majority," those beset with doubts. Thus, the haftora comes to shed light on the parasha, showing Moshe's actions, too, to be a battle for the soul of the nation. Hence Moshe's initiation of the immediate sentencing of the idol worshippers.

b. By fire and by water While the battle against idolatry is common to the parasha and the haftora, the real battle - as we have mentioned - is for the soul of the nation.

There are two principles upon which both battles - that of Moshe and that of Eliyahu - are based: fire and water. The golden calf in the parasha is formed from fire ("And I threw it into the fire and this calf emerged" - 32:24), and it is obliterated through fire and water ("And he took the calf that they had made and burnt it with fire and ground it until it was fine, and he sprinkled it upon the water" - 32:20). Likewise, fire and water are the signs from heaven that demonstrate God's displeasure with the worship of Ba'al. Water - rain - is first withheld for a prolonged period and then renewed when the prophets of Ba'al are destroyed and the faith in Ba'al removed from the hearts of the nation. Fire is the immediate and impressive sign: "The God who answers with fire is the real God" (18:24).

God's response is the response to the prophet's prayer. Both in the parasha and in the haftora we find the prayers of prophets and leaders: Moshe and Eliyahu. Each prays in his own way and in accordance with the requirements of his circumstances and his generation, but both are spokesmen for the nation and are the nation's representatives before God. Although Moshe and Eliyahu are spokesmen, they are distanced from the people in all matters concerning

their connection with idolatry - not only in a spiritual sense but also even physically. Also, both in the parasha and in the haftora, God "invites," as it were, the appeal and the prayer. In the parasha: "And now, leave Me" (32:10). (Rashi, quoting Midrash Tanchuma, points out that we have no evidence of any prayer on Moshe's part prior to this and asks why God tells Moshe to leave Him. The answer is that this was an opening for prayer, a hint to Moshe that the matter now depended on him and that if he prayed for the people, God would not destroy them.) In the haftora: "And God's word came to Eliyahu in the third year" (18:1) - God was commanding him to act.

This also demonstrates to us the difference between the period of the desert and the reality of national life in the land of Israel. In the desert, destruction of the nation as a result of idolatry was to be decisive and immediate: "Leave Me alone that My anger may burn against them and I shall consume them" (32:10). In the land of Israel, the Divine punishment was represented by drought, perhaps an expression of the cutting of relations between God and the people, conveying rebuke of the nation. Indeed, the drought - continuing as it did year after year - could also have brought about the nation's physical destruction.

d. Closing the circle In a certain sense the vision on Carmel closes a circle that began at the foot of Mount Sinai. In the wilderness of Sinai a harsh cry arose: "This is your god, O Israel" (32:4). And although Moshe prayed and destroyed the idol and its worshippers and those who danced around it, there was still no complete repair for this cry; no opposite cry that came to correct the situation. (The ox offered by Eliyahu on the broken altar that he repairs may represent the atonement for the golden calf, similar to what the Sages suggest is the symbolism of the Red Heifer. It may also be teaching us that the root of idolatry in Israel is the golden calf of the desert, and that any later manifestation of idolatry must be followed by atonement - including atonement for this root damage.) It was only when the roar of the nation at Carmel echoed all around - "The Lord, He is God, the Lord, He is God" (18:39) - that finally there was atonement for this catastrophe.

e. Moshe and Eliyahu There is a parallel between the two prophet-leaders, Moshe and Eliyahu, as elaborated in the Midrash: "And Eliyahu took twelve stones, like the number of the tribes of Ya'akov's children" - R. Tanchuma said in the house of R. Abba: "And through a prophet God brought Israel out of Egypt" (Hoshea 12:14) - this refers to Moshe, "And by a prophet they were preserved" - this refers to Eliyahu. We find two prophets of Israel from the tribe of Levi - first Moshe and then Eliyahu... Moshe redeemed them from Egypt... and Eliyahu redeemed them in the future... We find a complete parallel between Moshe and Eliyahu... Moshe gathered the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai and Eliyahu gathered them at Mount Carmel; Moshe destroyed idolators... and Eliyahu destroyed idolators... Moshe prayed for the nation, "Do not destroy Your nation and Your inheritance", and Eliyahu prayed for Israel - "Answer me, God, answer me"... Through Moshe the nation achieved love of the Holy One... and through Eliyahu the nation achieved love of the Holy One, as it is written, "the Lord, He is God"... Moshe brought down fire and Eliyahu brought down fire... Moshe built an altar and Eliyahu built an altar... Moshe, when he built his altar... built it from twelve stones, like the number of the children of Israel, and Eliyahu, when he built his altar, built it according to the number of the tribes of Israel..." (Pesikta Rabati 4).

In Eliyahu's era, just as in the era of Moshe, the evil inclination for idolatry was active, and each leader had to address this evil in a way appropriate to his generation and his circumstances. What was suitable in one instance would not necessarily be suitable in a different generation, but the purpose and the ultimate goal is the same: the twelve tribes are first redeemed by Moshe and later on are prothe final redemption by Eliyahu.

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From: Kenneth Block [SMTP:kenblock@worldnet.att.net] Subject: NCYI Weekly Divrei Torah - Parshat Ki Tisah
Parshat Ki Tisah RABBI SHLOMO YAFFE YOUNG ISRAEL OF HARTFORD, CT

20 Adar I 5760 February 26, 2000 Daf Yomi: Yevamot 88

I. In this week's parsha (Shmot 32-34) we come upon some of the most perplexing (from the perspective of human nature) texts in the Torah. The Jewish People, after weeks and months of the most incredible revelations of G-d's presence and truth ever known to humanity (plagues, splitting of the sea, clouds of Glory) culminating in the giving of the Torah to all Jews together in an unprecedented revelation at Har Sinai, still managed to make the eigel hazavah the golden calf.

Then Moses, instead of accepting the seemingly drastic - perhaps permanently compromised situation of the Jewish People and "laying low" - asks of G-d a request that can only be described as the ultimate in yiddisheh chutzpa (Jewish audacity). Moses says (33:15-16) "If Your panim revealed presence will not be with us don't take us up out of here" and then requests "veniflinu ani ve'amecha - Let Your people and I be made unique from all the nations on the face of the Earth".

Moses is asking that G-d treat us equally or perhaps even better than we were treated before the sin!

To understand these themes let us remind ourselves of some familiar fundamentals of Judaism:

1. Free will: This greatest fundamental of all means that every one of us is free at every moment to choose between doing/ thinking/ saying what G-d desires of us or chas ve'shalom, what He does not desire of us. Maimonides, in Hilchot Tshuva, explains that at any given point in our lives no matter where we have been before in our actions - we always have the power to choose the good of G-d's commands "without any (power or reality) forcing him (or her) to choose (one way or the other)." Maimonides extrapolates two principles from this theme.

A) That one should regret and repent for one's sins because they are his/her doing alone and he/ she bears full responsibility for them.

B) That because we are free we can always repent even at the last moment of our earthly lives and no matter how grievous the transgression.

2. That through repentance we can reach as high or higher levels of holiness as we could before the sin. As the Talmud (Brachot 34B) points out "In the place where ba'alei teshuva (the penitent) stand even perfect tzadikim (righteous) don't stand (or according to Maimonides [Hilchot Tshuva 7:4] "cannot stand"). Our free choice even extends to the level of holiness we can reach.

With these concepts in mind we can understand that notwithstanding all the revelations they experienced, G-d had to make it possible for the Jewish people to choose to worship the calf because they had to be free to choose. As our Sages tell us "whoever is greater (in potential for good) has a greater evil inclination than their fellow" because our service of G-d is meaningless if we don't have complete free choice.

Yet, even if we worshipped idols we can reach the ultimate greatness G-d had in mind for us - if we choose it. Moses said "if our tshuva is real - make us as unique and as close to You as before the golden calf. Until then we are not moving from Mount Sinai because we will only leave with whatever accomplishment You put us here to acquire."

The lesson is clear. Our past is no impediment for us to realize the exact potential G-d created us with. The only difference is that we have to make our "sins into merits" to move forward. This is accomplished by:

1. Taking the same energy, passion and ingenuity we use for pursuing our negative desires and applying them to the good which too often is calm, gentle, and passive.

We take the energy of the rebel and use it to serve G-d (paraphrase of HaRav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zt"l in "Al HaTshuva").

2. "Repentance out of love (of G-d), coming from the depths of the heart, with great love and fervor, and from a soul passionately desiring to cleave to the blessed G-d, and thirsting for G-d like a parched and barren soil [thirsts desperately for water]. For inasmuch as until now [until he repented] his soul had been in a barren wilderness and in the shadow of death, (which is the realm of the yetzer hara -evil inclination) and [had been] far removed from the light of the Divine Countenance, in the greatest possible measure, therefore, [now that he "repents out of love]" his soul thirsts [for G-d] even more intensely than the souls of the righteous [who have never sinned]. The righteous tzadik, ever close to G-d, is like one who always has water near at hand - his thirst is never so intense. The penitent, however, finds himself as if in a desert, where the very absence of water causes his thirst to burn with greater intensity].

As our Sages say: "Where penitents stand... not even the perfectly righteous can stand." (Likutei Amarim - Tanya chapter 8).

These accomplishments are what Moses inspired the Jewish people to strive for after the golden calf and this is what everyone of us can do as we "live with our Sedra".

II. There remains a question: What does our "uniqueness" mean? Let us go back to Har Sinai and see what G-d said to us then, as this is what Moses was trying to restore to us.

"If you keep My covenant you shall be for Me a "Segula" - (commonly translated as "a treasure" or "beloved")- from all the nations because all the earth is Mine." "You shall be to Me a kingdom of Cohanim (priests) and a kadosh (holy) nation."

Segula - often translated as "treasure" - actually means possessing a particular quality and influence. The Talmud speaks of stones, minerals and herbs possessing "segula" which means a particular influential quality e.g. curative, physical (such as hardness, brilliance and the like) etc.

Thus, the verse is saying that the Jewish people are to possess qualities that will positively influence and be a segula for all the nations to reveal that "all the earth is Mine". When all of humanity lives in harmony with their inherent nature of "In the image of G-d man was created" then we see the presence of G-d in "all the earth".

"Kadosh" (holy) actually means separated by being uplifted- we take that which is part of the mundane world and demonstrate its inherent G-dliness.

We all need to eat, all humans have families, but we bring G-dliness into these areas of life. Hence the Torah tells us to be kadosh in the areas of food with kashrut and of family life with the laws of relationships and marriage. By living in a way that reveals the G-dliness in everyday life we demonstrate that G-d is the reality of existence and not some philosophical abstraction.

This our role we are chosen to live in such a way that it is obvious to all humanity that "all the earth" is G-dly and, since we all have the same source, the positive implications and opportunities for each of us are endless.

This is why Maimonides includes the obligation to sway all of humanity to follow the Seven Noahide laws, the universal morality of all humankind - as a fundamental part of the revelation at Sinai and the election of the Jewish people.

The proof of our rising to our potential is the extent to which we

cause (both by example and by reaching out to the world) the values of Sinai to permeate all of humankind.

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From: RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu Subject: internet Chaburah-- Parshas Ki sisa

Prologue: People err. They sin to Hashem and, at times, even to each other. When one recognizes his misdeeds and desires to correct them, he undergoes a process. He apologizes, recognizes his misgiving and decides not to repeat those misgivings in the future. Such a process of changing one's style of action is difficult but signifies a true change in a person. Anything less would be difficult to call (or even provoke a) "Return."

Yet, all too often, we sin (even to those we think are "less than we") and cannot recognize our sin. In situations such as these, it would seem impossible to do Teshuvah. Moshe Rabbeinu too, seems to adopt that approach to Aharon when asking him what he did to bring out the nation's sin (32:21). What was the question? Did they not kill Chur and threaten his life?

The Sforno explains that the true sin of Bnei Yisroel was not the actual making of the Golden Calf. If Aharon had done so for the sake of his life, it would be a Chat'ah but not necessarily a Chat'ah Gedolah. The true magnitude of the nation's sin was actualized when the statement "Chag L'Hashem Machar" was proclaimed. Aharon's allowing the people to relish in their Avaira and to call it a Chag.

Truth be told, we all sin. However, the concept that takes a simple sin (Pesha) and turns it into a bigger sin is the enjoyment we have when we do the sin. If we relish the opportunity to ignore the word of Hashem, how will we ever approach him and recite a Vidui with a full heart. If we relish in embarrassing or "cutting another person down to size" how can we ever truly apologize to that person and try to correct our misgivings?

The Sefer Chochmas HaMatzpun notes that this was the true sin of Bnei Yisroel and continues to be the true impediment to Teshuva Shelima. The enjoyment one has while sinning against Hashem or another person, makes doing Teshuvah incomplete. This week's Chaburah examines the process of and to Teshuvah. It is entitled:

The Makings of a True Tzaddik

The Gemara (Kiddushin 49) discusses a case where a person is mikadesh a woman with the Tenai that he is a Tzaddik. The mishna notes that we are Choshesh for the Kiddushin because there is potential that he had Teshuvah thoughts in his heart. How can Teshuvah thoughts turn a person from a Rasha into a Tzaddik? Is there not a need for an action?

The Rambam (Hil. Teshuva 2:2) notes that true teshuva begins when a sinner leaves his sinning state, and decides in his heart that he will no longer do the Issur, he must feel bad about his past transgressions and must recite a Vidui with his lips. It seems from the Rambam that until Vidui is recited, it is impossible for a person to receive Kappara.

The Minchas Chinuch (Mitzva 364) notes our Gemara and asks how one can simply think Teshuva thoughts in his heart to be considered a Tzaddik if, no Vidui has been recited? He answers that one does not receive Kappara until he recites Vidui but he can be considered a Tzaddik once he decides to leave his sin. Thus, from the Minchas Chinuch, the term Tzaddik applies to a person who has sinned with the Charata (regret on prior misgivings) and Azivas HaChet (decision to leave the sinning way). Also, one can learn from the Minchas Chinuch's answer that one does not need Kappara to be called a Tzaddik.

Though it seems that the titles of Tzaddik and Rasha are also not based upon these Teshuva fundamentals. Rather, one can eradicate the Rasha title simply by suffering. The proof is from the Rambam (Hil. Edoth 12:2) who cites the Gemara (Makkos 23a) that notes that once a person receives Makkos he returns to his status of Kasher whether or not he does Teshuvah. (The Gra notes that this does not apply to monetary issues where true Teshuvah is necessary above Makkos). From this Rambam it appears that the Teshuvah process exists independent of the ability to remove the title of Rasha or apply the title Tzaddik. The receipt of punishment too, is enough to make someone no longer a Rasha.

All this assumes that there was no cheating of money. However, once financial impropriety was committed, one cannot simply be punished, he must undergo the Teshuvah process (See Sanhedrin 25b and Tur and Shulchan Aruch Siman 34). It appears that the name Rasha can be removed by changing one's ways without the Charata or Vidui. It also implies that changing one's ways is a process of Teshuvah on its own. How can one differentiate the two Teshuvah types?

HoRav Yehoshua Eichenstein (Rosh Yeshivas Matteh Aharon cited in Yeshurun, Tishrei 5757) suggested that there are two types of Teshuvah. There is the first type where one returns from his original errant ways. To return from the errant way is to lose the title Rasha. For one who is no longer a Rasha, he cannot be called by that title. This Teshuvah only requires Azivas HaChet. However, for the purpose of Kappara, the idea of Teshuva means to Hashem (See Mabib, Beis Elokim, Shaar II:1). This process requires the three components delineated by the Rambam.

This could perhaps explain how one could learn parts of the Teshuva process from the people of Ninveh. Goyim are only able to do Teshuvah for future action (See Rabbeinu Yona Ikkar 16:42). However, based upon our suggestion, there are two processes of Teshuvah. One is to Hashem and one is back to oneself. In Ninveh, Hashem saw the people who had returned TO THEMSELVES (Azivas HaChet). This is the Teshuva required of the Goyim and of one who has transgressed a Mitzva and now wants to correct his Pasul L'Eidus status. For this, one need only to change his errant ways and he will no longer be a Rasha. However, to complete Teshuva he must undergo the entire Teshuvah process with the Vidui recitation as well.

Therefore, if one is Mikadesh a woman with the condition he is a Tzaddik, we are Choshesh that he agreed to change his ways. That would remove the name Rasha and return

him to the regular status of Klal Yisroel (V'Ameh Kulam Tzaddikim - the nation of Hashem are all Tzaddikim). This process does not include the requirement to recite Vidui and hence, we are Choshesh for his Teshuvah and his Kiddushin.

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WEEKLY SICHA OF HARAV NEBENZAHL - PARSHAT KI TISAH 5760

The following is a translation of the sicha delivered by HaGaon HaRav Avigdor Nebenzahl every Monday night in the Beit Midrash of Yeshivat Hakotel. Shabbat Shalom, Nehemiah D. Klein. Please say a tefilla for refuah shlema for Baruch Yoseph ben Adina Batya he is the eleven year old son of one of our alumni who is in great need of "rachamei Shamayim".

PARSHAT KI TISAH

"When He finished speaking to him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moshe the two Tablets of Testimony" [1] (Shmot 31:18): Rashi expounds on this pasuk that "kechaloto" ("when he finished") is written without the "vav" after the "lamed" and is thus spelled the same way as "kechaloto" - "like his bride". Hashem gave the Torah to Moshe, as a groom gives a present to his bride. The entire nation was encamped around Har Sinai eagerly awaiting Moshe's descending the mountain with the Tablets in his hands. They had calculated that the moment they had been waiting for was about to arrive. They were not ordinary people, but this was the Jewish nation who had just received the Torah - more or less on the level of Adam HaRishon prior to his sin). It was a generation in which every Jew was a prophet: "Has a people ever heard the voice of G-d speaking from the midst of the fire as you have heard, and survived?" [2] (Devarim 4:33). These were the Jewish people who had witnessed the myriad of miracles in Egypt and at the sea. They had eaten the manna in the desert, described by one opinion in the Gemara as "bread that the ministering angels eat" [3] (Yoma 75b). Suddenly, from atop these lofty heights, they fall "from a roof so high to a pit as deep" [4] (Chagiga 5b). In very little time they sank from the level of prophets to one which made Hashem, G-d forbid, wish to destroy them: "He said He would destroy them - had not Moshe, His chosen one, stood in the breach before Him to turn away His wrath from destroying" [5] (Tehillim 106:23).

How could this happen? How could they sink to such a low level? The Kuzari and Ramban explain that it was not so deep - they did not really worship Avoda Zara. One would have to be out of his mind to think that the Jewish people at this point actually believed that the Golden Calf took them out of Egypt. This calf was totally inanimate, it certainly could not have created anything that existed before it came into being itself. Hashem would not have claims against anyone who was out of his mind.

The Kuzari and Ramban explain that the people did not really entertain the notion that the calf took them out of Egypt. They were not lacking a G-d, they missed Moshe Rabenu: "for this man Moshe who brought us up from the land of Egypt - we do not know what became of him" [6] (Shmot 32:1). Up until this point it was Moshe on whom the Divine Presence rested. All the miracles Moshe brought about such as raising his hand and splitting the sea, were able to come about because it was he who housed the Divine Presence. He was not a god, just a housing for the Shchina. The people now needed a new home for the Divine Presence - so they built the Golden Calf. This may not be classified as actual Avoda Zara, but it was a terrible sin nonetheless, as is evidenced by Hashem's desire to destroy them.

How did they reach such a low level? It all began with a miscalculation on the part of the Jewish people. The people thought that Moshe was supposed to return on that day. Six hours had passed and he had still not returned. They began to have their doubts. They knew that Moshe was very precise - to him midnight was exactly midnight and midday was precisely midday. They began to wonder: "we do not know what became of him". If Moshe was really gone, G-d forbid, what will become of the Jewish people? Without anyone carrying the Divine Presence, who would lead them into Israel? Would they remain in the desert for eternity? Would the manna continue to fall, after all it was due to the merit of Moshe Rabenu that it fell in the first place? There were many doubts, and to top it off, the Satan came and showed them the image of Moshe dying, they now begin to believe that he had actually died.

The Satan did not succeed in totally convincing the Jewish people that he died, for the people only said "we do not know what became of him", there was no mention that he died. They did, however, allow their imagination to overpower their intellect. They were terribly frightened. One who thinks logically would not have been frightened, he would have assumed that Hashem would not abandon his people, just because Moshe was not around perhaps Hashem would instruct Aharon how to proceed. Hashem had guided His nation: "from Egypt until now" [7] (Bamidbar 14:19), why should He not continue to guide them? If Moshe really had died, we must mourn but this is not cause to give up entirely. The problem is that people follow what their eyes see, not what their mind tells them.

My Rebbe HaRav Chaim Shmuelevitz z"l pointed out that in the Hoshanot recited on Hoshana Rabba we ask Hashem for salvation (Hoshana) for: "ground from accursedness ... soul from panic" [8]. In that paragraph of the Hoshanot we ask Hashem to save the granary from "gazam" - a type of locust, and the crop from "arbeh" - another type of locust, for they are destructive forces. By the same token the soul must be saved from panic, for panic can destroy the soul. This is precisely what happened in the desert. The people panicked. They were so frightened that they were not able to think logically. Logic would dictate not to fear, Hashem would reveal Himself to another, perhaps to Aharon who already was a prophet, and instruct him what to do from here. Hashem would not abandon His people, they did not sin so why should there be any cause for anger. Their panic lead to a decision being made in tremendous haste. (We are not permitted to criticize the generation of the desert - the generation of knowledge, we are only speaking of them based on our own understanding. We cannot judge this generation, we can only attempt to understand what happened based on our own limited capacity to judge). We must learn from here not to be hasty, not to be drawn by what our eyes see: "do not explore after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray" [9] (Bamidbar 15:39). Our imagination can at times paint a terrible picture, but in the end it is only our imagination.

R' Simcha Zisel of Kelm used to explain the pasuk referring to the ultimate redemption: "a song of ascents, when Hashem will return the captivity of Zion, we were like dreamers" (Tehillim 126:1). How are we to understand the pasuk, it does not say "we will be as dreamers", rather "we were like dreamers"? At times one can receive terrible blows, only to awaken realizing it was all a dream. When Hashem returns the captivity of Zion, all our troubles in this world will seem as but a dream. In the prayer the Chazan recites on the High Holydays prior to Mussaf (Nusach Ashkenaz), we say "May you transform all travail and evil to joy and gladness" [11]. We are not asking for joy and gladness in place of our troubles, rather that the troubles themselves be transformed into joy and gladness. All the troubles and hardships will seem as nothing but a dream.

Had the Jewish people thought in this manner at that time, they would not have gotten so excited and would not have made a calf. They would have approached Aharon for guidance. Aharon would either have used his own wisdom to guide them, or he would have asked Hashem what to do. Did Moshe not tell the people: "Behold! Aharon and Chur are with you; whoever has a grievance should approach them" [12] (Shmot 24:14). Aharon and Chur will sit and weigh what to do. Should they proceed to the Land of Israel or not? Should they wait until Hashem brings down the Tablets or should they not wait? They did not consult with Aharon, the Torah tells us: "the people gathered on Aharon" [14] (Shmot 32:1), not "towards Aharon" [13]. They dictated to Aharon what to do, they had already reached the conclusion that Moshe was gone and they therefore needed: "a god that will go before us" [15] (ibid.). They needed a place to house the Divine Presence, and if Chur would protest, they would have no choice but to kill him.

I am unaware (perhaps someone else may know), if Chazal mention anywhere that the Jewish people were found guilty of killing Chur. Moshe rebuked them for worshipping Avoda Zara, but what of the fact that they killed Chur? Is it not true that Hashem worries about the honor of the righteous more than of His own? Chur was the first Jew to be killed "al Kiddush Hashem" after the Torah was given, why were they not accountable for this? I do not wish to find fault in the Jewish people, but we are speaking of innocent blood that was spilled! Perhaps based on their situation, we cannot fault them. If they were in such a state of panic, then they were convinced that making an object to house the Divine Presence was their only hope for salvation. Chur's protest classified him in their eyes as a "rodef" - he was placing their lives in danger. For this reason the people were not faulted. The incident involving Chur's death is not mentioned explicitly in the Torah. We only know it from what Chazal tell us - based on the fact that Chur's name no longer appears. Had they thought logically, there would have been no justification for this stage of anger.

They felt that if Moshe died, Hashem must be angry. Even if Moshe had sinned atop the mountain, and Hashem had G-d forbid judged him, the calf would certainly not appease Hashem. Even if they did not realize that the calf was the cause of His anger, they should have realized that it would not help their cause. If Moshe had really died, the proper reaction would be to mourn, not "the people sat to eat and drink, and they got up to revel" [16] (Shmot 32:6). The explanation is that they were guided by fear, not logic. Being that they were so frightened, they viewed their finding a solution as raising themselves back up out of the deep pit, this being a cause for celebration. They now felt assured that they would reach the Land of Israel, there was reason to celebrate (despite the fact that they should also have been in mourning for Moshe Rabenu).

Clearly there were righteous people who did not believe in the calf. Chazal tell us that only three thousand people were killed by Moshe and a few more were punished after being tested by the water. Not all six hundred thousand people participated. The Gr"a teaches us: The Midrash relates the following two psukim: "Adam echa be-elef matzati ve-isha bechol EILEH lo matzati" [17] (Kohelet 7:28) and "he shall pay five cattle in place of the ox" [18] (Shmot 21:37).

What is connection between these psukim? The Gr"a points out that "eileh" in Kohelet alludes to "eileh elohecha Yisrael": "this (eileh) is your god, O Israel" [19] (Shmot 32:4) - no women were to be found there. The women were not involved in the "chet haegel". Among the men, on the other hand, there was one in a thousand. In other words, out of the six hundred thousand men, only six hundred sinned. Why then were three thousand killed? Because the pasuk says "he shall pay five cattle in place of the ox". In the laws of damages we find the payment is fivefold, here too for every man who sinned five were killed - the payment was fivefold.

The sin of the Golden Calf was one of confusion - the result in Shushan was quite the opposite. The Jewish people should have given up hope in Shushan. In contrast to other enemies of Israel, there was a tremendous upheaval that came about without warning. Nebuchadnezzar, for example, came from the North and was headed towards Yerushalayim. On the way he captured city after city, with Yirmiyahu warning them that Yerushalayim was also destined to fall. The false prophets claimed that Yerushalayim would not fall, but in any event they were not taken totally by surprise.

The Jewish people in Shushan, on the other hand, could not have imagined waking up in the morning and hearing: "and the edict was distributed in Shushan" [20] (Esther 3:15), they were caught totally off guard. The Jewish people had a good relationship with the non-Jews. The king invited them to his feast (although Mordechai, the "chareidi", protested that they should not go). On the surface, however, it seemed that the situation was very good. The Jews felt that the king loved them as much as he loved the other subjects, the Jews felt: "we have a sister in the royal palace" [21] (Megillah 15b) - a Jewess became queen. What could possibly go wrong? As Chazal explain: "and he proclaimed an amnesty for the provinces" [22] (Esther 2:18) refers to a reduction in taxes. Suddenly, without any warning an order came: "to destroy, to slay, and to exterminate all the Jews, from young to old, children, and women" [23] (Esther 3:13). The date set aside for this was less than a year away. The "achashdarpenim" were given the order. (Of what significance was it that they first received the order to destroy the Jews, and then to help them? The difference was that the "achashdarpenim" were in charge of the weapons, at this point they would give the weapons to the enemies of Israel).

There seemed to be no hope for a salvation at this point. The people should have given up

completely. It was here that the Jewish people displayed their strength, they did not despair, they cried to Hashem. They did not panic, they were not confused, they did not send a delegation to try and convince Achashverosh to rescind his decree (they sent Esther, but that was only planned by Mordechai and Esther, the rest of the Jewish people turned to Hashem). The Jewish people felt that they could rely on none other than Hashem, they did not send a delegation to have talks with Haman, whether he would shake their hand or not. The Jewish people understood very well that the only recourse is through "sackcloth and ashes" [24] (Esther 4:3), because "there is none beside Him" [25] (Devarim 4:35).

The Jewish people realized that Mordechai was right all along, there was no need to go to the feast. There was no need to befriend the other nations: "behold! it is a nation that will dwell in solitude and not be reckoned among the nations" [26] (Bamidbar 23:9). Certainly it was inappropriate to attend this particular feast which was a celebration of the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. According to Achashverosh's calculations, the Beit Hamikdash was not destined to be rebuilt, therefore he took out the holy vessels.

It was forbidden to participate in such a feast with such an evil person despite the fact that the food was Glatt Kosher, as we are told: "to do according to each man's pleasure" [27] (Esther 1:8), all "hechsherim" were available, Badatz, She-erit Yisrael, etc.). The food may have been Glatt Kosher, but the feast was "treif" through and through. It was now that they understood that Mordechai was right. Chazal tell us that the Jewish people opposed Mordechai's not bowing down to Haman. They thought this would kindle hatred within Haman. It was later on that they realized that Mordechai was right, one must not bow to such a wicked man, the only solution was to repent. They realized that their initial declaration of: "from here stem strong grounds for a notification of coercion regarding acceptance of the Torah" was a false one, the Torah is truth and "there is none beside Him". Unlike the generation of the desert, in Shushan they were able to overcome their state of panic and confusion.

Esther said "Go, assemble all the Jews that are to be found in Shushan, and fast for me" [29] (Esther 4:16). If Haman had truly planned to annihilate the Jewish nation, would it not have made more sense to scatter them. It would then be practically impossible for Haman to wipe them all out in one day. Being that the king only gave him permission to spend one day in killing the Jews, his plans would thus be thwarted. The date of the thirteenth of Adar was heavenly decreed, perhaps if they could just survive for that day everything would be fine. Even by natural means, if Haman would not be able to find the m on the same day, they would buy time. They would have time to hide and perhaps gather all the necessary weapons. The Jewish people, however, understood that at this point it was prayer that was needed. The merit of the prayer of the masses, of the children, the people repenting, this is what will aid us, not strategies of scattering the people and gathering weapons.

Esther does employ natural means, she even places her life in danger when approaching the king. Even while doing this, she does not look for the easy route. Should she not have done her utmost to appear beautiful before the king? We are told: "and I, with my maids, will fast also" [30] (ibid.). At the end of three days of fasting, a woman does not appear her best. Rather, Esther understands that the salvation will not come completely through natural means. It is only repenting and good deeds that will be effective. This repentance, to a certain degree, was a "tikkun" for the "chet haegel". What happened in Shushan was a "tikkun" for another reason as well. The "chet haegel" was twofold. In addition to the sin itself (no matter how we explain it, it was sinful), they did not consult the sages of their time as Moshe had previously instructed. The people in Shushan atoned for this, by following the advice of Mordechai, the sage of their generation. They did not question his actions but rather followed what he said.

Shushan was not a total "tikkun" for the "chet haegel", for had it been they would have returned to the situation they were when the first Tablets were given. For example, the first Tablets are described as "charut", engraved. Chazal point out that the word "charut" is composed of the same letters as "cherut", freedom. Some say this refers to freedom from the angel of death, and some say to freedom from oppressive regimes. We have not reached either of these. Chazal do praise the Jewish people of Shushan for: "the Jews confirmed and undertook upon themselves" [31] (Esther 9:27), but this acceptance was not total. We see from examining the period that immediately followed, that this acceptance was incomplete. Approximately ten years after the Purim incident, Ezra went up to the Land of Israel. I do not recall the exact number, but very few joined him. One would have expected a massive Aliyah following such an event. In addition, permission had been granted to build the Beit Hamikdash. The people had the opportunity to serve Hashem in Yerushalayim. This, however, did not occur. The number of people that came was far less than those that came with Zrubavel. The re-acceptance: "the accepted the Torah again in the days of Achashverosh" [32] (Shabbat 88a), fell short of its potential.

This may explain why Purim was specifically established on "the days on which the Jews gained relief from their enemies" [33] (Esther 9:22), although it meant that the walled cities observe a different day than the non-walled cities. Should Purim not have been established on the day of the war, the Thirteenth of Adar described in the Gemara as: "the time when all the Jews assembled" [34] (Megillah 2a). This would have meant uniformity, for the entire world can say: "and it was turned about: the Jews prevailed over their adversaries" [35] (Esther 9:1). One possible explanation is that we wish to show that we are not celebrating the Jewish people killing their enemies, but rather "they accepted the Torah again in the days of Achashverosh" - the acceptance of the Torah. Relief from the enemy gives us more time to accept the Torah out of our own free will. During times of war, we all recite "Shma Yisrael Hashem Elokenu Hashem Echad" "Hear O Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is the one and Only" (Devarim 6:4), but there is no time to delve into what this means for we are too busy and worried about the war. The two days of Purim were a time of relief for the Jewish people when they had the opportunity to properly accept the Torah and therefore the real time of celebration.

As we mentioned before, this acceptance was not complete. One of the reasons given for not reciting Hallel on Purim is: "We are still servants of Achashverosh" [36] (Megilla 14a) - the redemption was not complete. Whatever acceptance they had did succeed in nullifying Haman's decree: "If someone takes upon himself the yoke of Torah - the yoke of government

and the yoke of worldly responsibilities are removed from him" [37] (Pirke Avot 3:6). The people managed to correct their ways in Shushan, and based on what we have said, they also corrected their errors from the "chet haegel". They learned that intellect should rise above confusion, and one's soul should not be destroyed by panic. We must not follow what appears before our eyes. We must realize that the way to deal with a Haman is to repent and perform good deeds - this is far more effective than any weapons. If we repent, the other nations will assist us with their weapons. Without repenting we will not even have any of our own weapons. Thank G-d, the Jews of that time chose the proper route, realizing that it is prayer and repentance which bring about change. They merited having "The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor" [38] (Esther 8:16), and "so may it be for us" [39].

APPENDIX (TRANSLITERATIONS OF SOURCES) [1] "Vayiten el Moshe kechaloto ledaber ito beHar Sinai shnei luchot haedut" [2] "hashama am kol Elokim chayim mitoch haesh kaasher shamata ata vayechei" [3] "lechem shemalachei hasharet ochlim oto" [4] "meigra ram leibra amikta" [5] "vayomer lehashmidam lulei Moshe bechiro amad baperetz lefanav lehshiv chamato mehahschit" [6] "ki ze Moshe haish asher he -elanu me-eretz Mitzraim lo yadanu me haya lo" [7] "miMitzrayim ve-ad hena" [8] "adama me-erer ... nefesh mibehala" [9] "velo taturu acharei levavchem ve-acharei eineichem" [10] "Shir hamaalot beshuv Hashem et shivat Tzion hayinu kecholmim" [11] "vechlo tzarotenu veinuyenu hafoch lanu ulechol Yisrael lesasson ulesimcha" [12] "vehinei Aharon veChur imachem mi baal devarim yigash aleihem" [13] "el Aharon" [14] "vayikahel haam al Aharon" [15] "elohim asher yelchu lefanenu" [16] "vayeshve haam le-echol veshato vayakumu letzachek" [17] "adam echa be-efel matzati ve-isha bechol eile lo matzati" [18] "chamisha bakar yeshalem tachat hashor" [19] "eile elohecha Yisrael" [20] "vehadat nitna beShushan habira" [21] "achot yesh lanu bebeit hamelech" [22] "vahanacha lamedinot asa" [23] "lehashmid laharog ule-abad et kol haYehudim minar ve-ad zaken taf venashim" [24] "sack vaefer" [25] "ein od milvado" [26] "hen am levadad yishkon uvagoyim lo yitchashav" [27] "laasot kirtzon ish vaish" [28] "modaa raba leOrayta" [29] "lech knos et kol haYehudim hanimtzem beShushan vetzumu alai" [30] "gam ani venaarotai atzum ken" [31] "kiyemu vekiblu" [32] "hadur kibluha bimei Achashverosh" [33] "kayamim asher nachu bahem haYehudim meoiveihem" [34] "zman kehilla lakol hu" [35] "venahafoch hu asher yishletu haYehudim heima besoneihem" [36] "akati avdei Achashverosh anan" [37] "Kol hamekabel alav ol Torah, maavirin mimenu ol malchut veol derech erez" [38] "layehudim hayta ora vesimcha vesasson vikar" [39] "ken tihye lanu"

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