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PM subject: Advanced Parsha - Ki Tisa

Taking the Blame Ki Tisa (Exodus 30:11-34:35)

by Rabbi Abba Wagensberg

Taking the Blame

Greetings from the holy city of Jerusalem!
This week's Torah portion describes the infamous Golden
Calf. When Moses prays to God to forgive the Jewish
people for this incident, he pleads, "Blot me out of Your
Book" (Exodus 32:32). The implication of this statement
is that Moses's erasure from the Torah would somehow
atone for the Jewish people's sin. We know that Moses
was the humblest man who ever lived, which makes this
statement seem quite surprising. The Golden Calf was a
major offense. How could Moses be so presumptuous to
think that removing his name from the Torah could atone
for the entire fiasco?

According to the Baal Shem Tov (9), whenever Moses
saw the Jewish people behaving inappropriately, he
blamed himself. He assumed that his own failings were
the most probable cause of the people's misbehavior. This
attitude can be understood on two levels. On a
Kabbalistic level, if the leader of a generation makes even
a slight mistake, it can cause a ripple effect. A leader's
small error in thought, speech or action may result in the
people's committing major crimes.

The Mekor Mayim Chaim (6) writes that this effect can
be compared to a person holding a long piece of string,
with the top end between his fingers and the bottom lying
on the ground. If the person moves the top of the string
even slightly, the bottom will move as well. The top of
the string - the "head" - symbolizes the head of the
generation. Just as the head of the string causes the
bottom to move, so too does the head of the generation
impact those lower down.

On a practical level, we can understand Moses's behavior
as covering for the Jewish people. He took responsibility
for their mistake because of his intense commitment to
leading them. It is as if Moses said, "Had I been a better
leader, they would have been better people." He saw their
mistake as a reflection on his failure to guide them
properly.

In fact, this was not the case, as we see in God's
subsequent statement, "The one who really sinned to me I
will blot out of My Book" (Exodus 32:33). Moses was

completely guiltless in this situation. Yet we see that Moses was nevertheless prepared to cover for the people by taking the blame himself.

Now we can understand Moses's plea to be taken out of the Torah. Moses was not being presumptuous by claiming that his erasure from the Torah would atone for the people's sin; rather, he was begging, "Punish me instead of them!" A willingness to cover for other people - deflecting the accusations against them and accepting the blame ourselves - is one of the greatest ways to demonstrate love.

May we learn to love each other to the degree where we can point the accusatory finger at ourselves instead of at others. In this way, may we be able to rectify our old mistake of baseless hatred, and replace it with baseless love, that we may merit our full and final redemption.

from: Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

<ravadlerstein@torah.org> to: targumim@torah.org
date: Feb 17, 2022, 4:34 PM subject: **Reb Yeruchem – Kicking the Tires**

By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

Parshas Ki Sisa Kicking the Tires print

They have strayed quickly from the way that I commanded.[2]

How quickly? Serving the eigel ha-zahav a mere forty days after the revelation at Sinai would seem tragically quick enough. But Chazal did not see it that way. Rather, their time-frame for the failure of the Bnei Yisrael is so astonishing that it boggles the mind.

A midrash[3] lists a few opinions. "They remained with Hashem in spirit only 11 days. For 29, their thoughts turned to building an eigel ... They were with Hashem only one day. The other days were given to thoughts of an eigel ... Rabbi Meir says, 'Not even for a single day were they with Hashem. Instead, they stood at Sinai saying naasheh ve-nishmah with their lips, while their hearts were oriented towards avodah zarah.'"

Why would Chazal be so hyper-critical? Why would they undo the crowning achievement of the Bnei Yisrael, in reacting so beautifully when Hashem offered them the Torah. Hashem Himself praised them for their alacrity and trust. "Who revealed this secret to them – to use the very formula of naasheh ve-nishma utilized by the angels?" He placed two crowns on their heads, one for each word. Why take that away from them?

Spiritual merchandise must be weighed and evaluated in the same way that we evaluate ordinary materials. Before a major purchase, we consult experts who can find flaws that are not easy to detect. Kicking the tires of a used car doesn't tell us all that much. If we know what we are doing, we take the car to a knowledgeable mechanic for a consultation. He can look under the hood and tell us about issues we would not see on our own.

We try to find out about materials and workmanship. Most of all, we try to assess the durability of a product. How long will it function? When will wear and tear make it unreliable or inoperative?

The same is true of spiritual materials. Dovid said, "The ignoramus does not know; the fool does not understand. When the wicked spring up like grass... it is only to destroy them forever." [4] The unlearned are taken aback when evildoers thrive and flourish like grass. They do not comprehend that their success has no durability, no staying-power. As quickly as grass sprouts it also withers and dies. Its success is short-lived.

Klal Yisrael, on the other hand, is praised precisely for its durability, which is rock-solid. Literally. Bilam said, "From its origins, I see it rock-like. I see it from the hills." [5] Rashi renders it, "I look at their origin and at the beginning of their roots. I see them entrenched and strong as these rocks and hills, by way of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs." The strength of the Jewish people is that their greatness lasts. It passes the test of time. The nations of the world had their greats as well, but it was a fleeting accomplishment. The greatness quickly vanished.

The midrash we cited is based on that principle. A spiritual high is pure nitzchuyus/eternity only if it in fact lasts forever. If it doesn't, there had to have been some defect in it from the beginning. It is like a product that fails because of a flaw in its materials. Chazal understood that the terrible failure through the eigel did not spring up from nowhere. The people did not do an abrupt about-face from the majesty of Sinai. On some level, a flaw must have been present earlier. Like the tiniest crack in glass, it would spread until it became visible and ugly. We understand, of course, that when Chazal spoke of thoughts that quickly turned to avodah zarah, they certainly did not mean it in the usual sense of outright idolatry. They meant it a super-sensitive scale, befitting the high plane of spirituality that the people stood on at the time. Their point was that the Bnei Yisrael would not

have been capable of the enormous transgression of the eigel so soon after matan Torah, without some miniscule, imperceptible flaw – some leaning away from Hashem – present even while expressing their extraordinary love for Him at Sinai.

1 Based on Daas Torah by Rav Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l, Shemos pgs. 283-285 ↑ 2 Shemos 32:8 ↑ 3 Shemos Rabbah 42:7-8 ↑ 4 Tehillim 92:7-8 ↑ 5 Bamidbar 23:9 ↑

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from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>
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Can There Be Compassion Without Justice? Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz”l

At the height of the drama of the Golden Calf, a vivid and enigmatic scene takes place. Moses has secured forgiveness for the people. But now, on Mount Sinai yet again, he does more. He asks God to be with the people. He asks Him to “teach me Your ways,” and “show me Your glory” (Ex. 33:13, Ex. 33:18). God replies: “I will cause all My goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim My Name, the Lord, in your presence ... I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,” He said, “you cannot see My face, for no one may see Me and live.

”Ex. 33:20

God then places Moses in a cleft in the rock face, telling him he will be able to “see My back” but not His face, and Moses hears God say these words:

“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished.

Ex. 34:6-7

This passage became known as the “Thirteen Attributes of God’s Mercy.”

The Sages understood this episode as the moment in which God taught Moses, and through him all future generations, how to pray when atoning for sin (Rosh Hashanah 17b). Moses himself used these words with

slight variations during the next crisis, that of the spies. Eventually they became the basis of the special prayers known as Selichot, prayers of penitence. It was as if God were binding himself to forgive the penitent in each generation by this self-definition.[1] God is compassionate and lives in love and forgiveness. This is an essential element of Jewish faith.

But there is a caveat. God adds: “Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished.” There is a further clause about visiting the sins of the parents upon the children which demands separate attention and is not our subject here. The caveat tells us that there is forgiveness but also punishment. There is compassion but also justice.

Why so? Why must there be justice as well as compassion, punishment as well as forgiveness? The Sages said:

“When God created the universe He did so under the attribute of justice, but then saw it could not survive. What did He do? He added compassion to justice and created the world.”

See Rashi to Genesis 1:1.

This statement prompts the same question. Why did God not abandon justice altogether? Why is forgiveness alone not enough?

Some fascinating recent research in diverse fields from moral philosophy to evolutionary psychology, and from games theory to environmental ethics, provides us with an extraordinary and unexpected answer.

The best point of entry is Garrett Hardin’s famous paper written in 1968 about “the tragedy of the commons.”[2] He asks us to imagine an asset with no specific owner: pasture land that belongs to everyone (the commons), for example, or the sea and the fish it contains. The asset provides a livelihood to many people, the local farmers or fishermen. But eventually it attracts too many people. There is over-pasturing or overfishing, and the resource is depleted. The pasture is at risk of becoming wasteland. The fish are in danger of extinction.[3]

What then happens? The common good demands that everyone from here on must practice restraint. They must limit the number of animals they graze or the number of fish they catch. But some individuals are tempted not to do so. They continue to over-pasture or overfish. They justify to themselves that the gain to them is great and the loss to others is small, since it is divided by many. Self-

interest takes precedence over the common good, and if enough people act on these instincts, the result is disaster. This is the tragedy of the commons, and it explains how environmental catastrophes and other disasters occur. The problem is the free rider, the person who pursues their self-interest without bearing their share of the cost of the common good. Because of the importance of this type of situation to many contemporary problems, they have been intensively studied by mathematical biologists like Anatol Rapoport and Martin Nowak and behavioural economists like Daniel Kahneman and the late Amos Tversky.[4] One of the things they have done is to create experimental situations that simulate this sort of problem. Here is one example. Four players are each given \$8. They are told they can choose to invest as much or as little as they want in a common fund. The experimenter collects the contributions, adds them up, adds 50% (the gain the farmer or fisherman would have made by using the commons), and distributes the sum equally to all four players. So if each contributes the full \$8 to the fund, they each receive \$12 at the end. But if one player contributes nothing, the fund will total \$24, which with 50% added becomes \$36. Distributed equally it means that each will receive \$9. Three will thus have gained \$1, while the fourth, the free rider, will have gained \$9.

This, though, is not a stable situation. As the game is played repeatedly, the participants begin to realise there is a free rider among them even if the experiment is structured so that they don't know who it is. One of two things then tends to happen. Either everyone stops contributing to the fund (i.e. the common good) or they agree, if given the choice, to punish the free rider. Often people are keen to punish, even if it means that they will lose thereby, a phenomenon sometimes called "altruistic punishment."

Some have linked participants to MRI machines to see which parts of the brain are activated by such games. Interestingly, altruistic punishment is linked to pleasure centres in the brain. As Kahneman puts it:

"It appears that maintaining the social order and the rules of fairness in this fashion is its own reward. Altruistic punishment could well be the glue that holds societies together."[5]

This, though, is hardly a happy situation. Punishment is bad news for everyone. The offender suffers, but so do the punishers, who have to spend time or money they

might otherwise use in improving the collective outcome. And in cross-cultural studies, it turns out to be people from countries where there is widespread free-riding who punish most severely. People are most punitive in societies where there is the most corruption and the least public-spiritedness. Punishment, in other words, is the solution of last resort.

This brings us to religion. A whole series of experiments has shed light on the role of religious practice in such circumstances. Tests have been carried out in which participants have the opportunity to cheat and gain by so doing. If, without any connection being made to the experiment at hand, participants have been primed to think religious thoughts – by being shown words relating to God, for example, or being reminded of the Ten Commandments – they cheat significantly less.[6] What is particularly fascinating about such tests is that outcomes show no relationship to the underlying beliefs of the participants. What makes the difference is not believing in God, but rather being reminded of God before the test. This may well be why daily prayer and other regular rituals are so important. What affects us at moments of temptation is not so much background belief but the act of bringing that belief into awareness.

Of much greater significance have been the experiments designed to test the impact of different ways of thinking about God. Do we think primarily in terms of Divine forgiveness, or of Divine justice and punishment? Some strands within the great faiths emphasise one, others the other. There are hellfire preachers and those who speak in the still, small voice of love. Which is the more effective? Needless to say, when the experimental subjects are atheists or agnostics, there is no difference. They are not affected either way. Among believers, though, the difference is significant. Those who believe in a punitive God cheat and steal less than those who believe in a forgiving God. Experiments were then performed to see how believers relate to free-riders in common-good situations like those described above. Were they willing to forgive, or did they punish the free-riders even at a cost to themselves. Here the results were revelatory. People who believe in a punitive God, punish people less than those who believe in a forgiving God.[7] Those who believe that, as the Torah says, God "does not leave the guilty unpunished," are more willing to leave punishment

to God. Those who focus on Divine forgiveness are more likely to practice human retribution or revenge.

The same applies to societies as a whole. Here the experimenters used terms not entirely germane to Judaism: they compared countries in terms of percentages of the population who believed in heaven and hell.

“Nations with the highest levels of belief in hell and the lowest levels of belief in heaven had the lowest crime rates. In contrast, nations that privileged heaven over hell were champions of crime. These patterns persisted across nearly all major religious faiths, including various Christian, Hindu and syncretic religions that are a blend of several belief systems.”[8]

This was so surprising a finding that people asked: in that case, why are there religions that de-emphasise Divine punishment? Azim Shariff offered the following explanation:

“Because though Hell might be better at getting people to be good, Heaven is much better at making them feel good.” So, if a religion is intent on making converts, “it’s much easier to sell a religion that promises a Divine Paradise than one that threatens believers with fire and brimstone.”[9]

It is now clear why, at the very moment He is declaring his compassion, grace and forgiveness, God insists that He does not leave the guilty unpunished. A world without Divine justice would be one where there is more resentment, punishment, and crime, and less public-spiritedness and forgiveness, even among religious believers. The more we believe that God punishes the guilty, the more forgiving we become. The less we believe that God punishes the guilty, the more resentful and punitive we become. This is a totally counterintuitive truth, yet one that finally allows us to see the profound wisdom of the Torah in helping us create a humane and compassionate society.

[1] The Talmud in Rosh Hashanah 17b says that God made a covenant on the basis of these words, binding Himself to forgive those who, in penitence, appealed to these attributes. Hence their centrality in the prayers leading up to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and on Yom Kippur itself.

[2] Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” Vol. Science 162, 13 December 1968: no. 3859 pp. 1243-1248.

[3] Long before Garrett Hardin, there was an old Hassidic story about a village where the people were asked each to donate an amount of wine to fill a large vat to present to the King on his forthcoming visit to the village. Each villager secretly contributed only water instead of wine, arguing to themselves that such a small dilution would not be

noticed in the large gift. The King arrived, the villagers presented him with the vat, he drank from it and said, “It’s just plain water.” I guess many folk traditions have similar stories. This is, in essence, the tragedy of the commons.

[4] See Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*. New York: Basic, 1984. Matt Ridley, *The Origins of Virtue*, Penguin, 1996. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Allen Lane, 2011. Martin Nowak and Roger Highfield, *Super Cooperators: Evolution, Altruism and Human Behaviour or Why We Need Each Other to Succeed*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2011.

[5] Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 308.

[6] Ara Norenzayan, *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*, Princeton University Press, 2013, 34-35.

[7] *Ibid.*, 44-47.

[8] *Ibid.*, 46.

[9] *Ibid.*

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Musings Daily Digest for 02/17/2022

Meshech Chochma Al HaTorah

by R. Gidon Rothstein

People Are More Important Than Shabbat

Meshech Hochmah points out two inconsistencies in Shemot 31;14. The verse obligates Jews to observe Shabbat, “ki kodesh hi lachem, it is sanctified for you,” which sounds like Shabbat is for the Jewish people. The next words assign the death penalty to anyone who treats Shabbat mundanely, justifying it because “for anyone who performs creative labor during it (Shabbat), that soul will be cut off from its nation.” Halachah generally views death as more severe than karet, so our verse seems to base the death penalty on this sin’s incurring a lower level punishment, an odd logic.

To explain, Meshech Hochmah notes that in ordinary circumstances, Shabbat is kodesh for Jews in the sense that Jews may violate Shabbat to save any Jew’s life, no matter how insignificant that Jew might seem, and may do so in cases of doubt, too, doubt the danger is life-threatening, and/or doubt the violation will save the Jew. Balanced against Jewish lives, Shabbat is very much kodesh lachem, sanctified for you, under your control. Because without Jews, R. Meir Simhah says, there would be no Shabbat, no weekly testimony to Gd’s having created the world and “rested” on the seventh “day.” Unless We’re Not

On the other hand—explaining the shift in the verse—a Jew who deliberately violates Shabbat is worse than an animal (he says).

Where a court cannot or does not mete out the death penalty, the Jew incurs karet, which Meshech Hochmah asserts is worse than death (contrary to our usual view). Death atones, restores the sinner to membership in the people, where karet cuts the person off from the nation and Gd's Torah. In that sense, death is a favor. (He is arguing that even though death is worse than karet in the halachic hierarchy of punishment, its results for the sinner are better.)

For him, the verse reads, loosely: Shabbat is for you to serve your function in the world. As long as you do, you are more important, so any life-saving medical needs outweigh Shabbat. Should a Jew violate Shabbat on purpose, the sinner loses his/her full belonging to the covenant and citizenship, with the way to restore it—to avoid eternal exclusion (and other than teshuvah, where courts cannot intervene)—being the death penalty. As support, he reminds us of the opinion of R. Elazar b. Shim'on in the Gemara (not accepted in practice), who held Jews could kill another Jew to prevent him/her from deliberate Shabbat violation, as we do hold is true of those about to commit murder. We usually think of rodef, the right to kill a murderer before s/he kills, as a matter of defending the intended victim; for R. Elazar b. Shim'on, it applied to Shabbat violation, to avert spiritual damage of equal or worse level (Meshech Hochmah is assuming halachah accepts R. Elazar's values statement, just not his conclusion).

Identify with Others When You Pray with Them

After the sin of the Golden Calf, the Torah uses the verse va-yehal, implored, for Moshe's prayer on their behalf, 32;11. Berachot 32a quotes R. Eliezer Ha-Gadol, Moshe prayed until he was overcome by ahilu, defined as a fire in the bones. Meshech Hochmah says Moshe kept praying until he experienced himself as having this same flaw, felt it in his bones. (He is relying on Baba Batra 109b, which says the officiating priest for the idol of Michah (see Shofetim 18) was a descendant of Moshe; if so, Moshe, too, has idolatry in him.)

The fully felt own future involvement in this kind of worship (Meshech Hochmah is assuming what I believe is a general Jewish idea, descendants credit and/or implicate their ancestors), he could point out the insufficiency of Gd's idea of wiping out the Jews and turning Moshe into a great nation. It would be no better, since he, Moshe, also had such potential in his future.

R. Meir Simhah Ha-Kohen may have meant only the one technical piece, Moshe had to see and feel his own future to be able to prove Gd's idea wouldn't work. To me, he implies praying for others takes more work than just saying, oh, please, Gd, wouldn't it be great if so-and-so got such-and-such. To pray for others takes identification, after which we can find the path to an "argument" Gd might more likely accept. Moshe had to work to see how he was more like them than he assumed, showing the avenue forward.

The Stubborn Human Need for Physicality

In our third comment for the week, Moshe comes down the mountain, sees the Calf, and breaks the luhot, the Tablets, 32;19. Meshech Hochmah starts his reaction with what he asserts is a basic principle, Torah is not encumbered by physicality or location. While we treat certain places with more sanctity, such as Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple, he still believes the details of Torah are the same everywhere.

(My Bar-Ilan has a parenthesis, "other than mitzvot tied to the Land of Israel." I believe someone else added that, struggling with how he could have said everything is the same, when Israel is clearly different. I think Meshech Hochmah was focused on the ideas and worldview Torah promotes, which are all the same regardless of place. It is applied as appropriate to each place and person, but the Torah is the same everywhere.)

Similarly, the lowliest Jew has the same Torah as Moshe Rabbenu (although there, too, they will have different roles, each as proper for him/her/them).

In all this, Moshe was an agent/broker, entrusted to bring the Torah to the people, the Torah that broadcasts the message of Gd alone being at the center of existence, the only true necessity. When Moshe failed to show, the people decided they needed a substitute to bring the spirit Moshe had managed to manifest, so they made the Calf (this follows one strand in Midrash, the Calf was to replace Moshe, not be a god).

They had the urge to offer sacrifices, sing, dance, invest themselves physically in worship, and without Moshe they were desperate for an alternative. He likens it to Yerov'am, the one who split off the Northern Kingdom, making calves as an alternative to the Beit Ha-Mikdash, for fear the people would go to Jerusalem and also return to allegiance to the Davidic kings. To accomplish his goal, he only needed to guard the roads, I think Meshech

Hochmah is saying; his establishing an alternative worship was to assuage the people's deep need for connection to something.

(The idea of worship as an instinct/need is very important. It explains why people tend to have some ruling principle, to which they become dedicated, a practical demonstration of how avodah zarah develops. I just recently saw a story about a man worried about his carbon footprint, so he called in an expert to check and tell him where he was going right and wrong; it reminded me of calling a kohen to your house to check for tzara'at. Because when people do not have Gd, they will designate something else to fill the role.)

We Need to Free Ourselves of the Attachment to Physical Manifestations

To disabuse the Jews of the idea they had to have replaced him, he made a point of his lack of significance. Nor will the Mishkan or Mikdash be independently important places, Moshe wanted them to know (a remarkable addition by Meshech Hochmah, since the people had no idea there was going to be a Mishkan at this point; he reads Moshe to be making a point for the future, too, in this moment of national failure).

Gittin 56b tells us Titus entered the Temple with a prostitute and made use of her services there, with no repercussions, because by then the structure had lost its sanctity, had been profaned by the Jews' failures and Gd's leaving it for the Romans to destroy.

The same was true of the luhot. Written by Gd, their sanctity, too, depended wholly on the Jewish people putting them in the framework of service to the One, nonphysical, Gd, their realizing that all sanctity extends only from proper service of Gd, whatever structures we build or practices we perform.

The Depth of Their Error

Meshech Hochmah goes to some length to show how much their mistake pervaded their worldview. When Moshe approached, they were dancing (the verse says), betraying their lack of any doubt about the correctness of their actions. Remember, Moshe is one day late, they're already fully invested in and excited about a new intermediary.

Had he brought the Tablets, they would have conceded they were wrong with the Calf, only to switch to adoring the luhot excessively, ignoring the core problem.

It's why tradition thinks Gd congratulated Moshe for having broken them, is the reason Gd refers to the broken luhot when telling Moshe to make new ones. Gd will write on the second luhot lessons Moshe taught in practice by breaking the first ones, that Jews must serve Gd alone. The idea also explains why the Aron contained both sets of luhot (as Baba Batra 14b says), to stress that objects attain sanctity and durability only by being used for Gd's service, not because of who or Who made them. The Jews show the same erroneous thinking in speaking of Moshe as who took them out of Egypt, when he was solely a messenger to speak to Par'oh. Gd picks up on it, calls them Moshe's people (ki shihet amecha, your people has gone astray) because they identified themselves that way, elevating Moshe to a status he did not deserve (or want).

Meshech Hochmah has more on the issue (an indication of how vital he found the point, one I find still vital in our times), but we will stop here, with the basic lesson: people tend to focus on the physical, ascribe the workings of the world to those. Being Jewish is about standing up for the difficult to absorb idea that it's about a Gd we cannot see, hear, or touch, and yet Who created the world and continues to support it and direct it.

People matter, a great deal, Ki Tissa taught R. Meir Simhah Ha-Kohen, as long as they focus in the right direction, when there are many temptations not to, even within the realms of Gd's service. And when people do go wrong, the first step to effective prayer on their behalf is identifying with them, seeing where (as my father a"h used to like to quote) there but for the grace of Gd go I.

from: OU Kosher GerstenE@ou.org subject:

**Halacha Yomis - Shabbos Snowfall, Salt
Rabbi Yaakov Luban and Rabbi Eli Gersten**

Q. There is a wet snow falling on Shabbos, and I am concerned that my front steps and walkway will freeze over and become very slippery, am I permitted to put down salt on Shabbos?

A. In general, it is forbidden to actively melt ice on Shabbos (See Shulchan Aruch OC 320:9). Also, one may not handle ice melting pellets, since they are muktza. However, when there is a public safety concern, it is permitted. Shulchan Aruch (OC 308:18) writes that one may remove a public safety hazard from the road, even in a place where there is no eiruv, so long as one's act of

carrying does not violate a Torah prohibition. Based on this, Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchaso [25:9:(49)] writes that to protect the public from dangerous icy conditions, one is permitted to put down salt on Shabbos. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l ruled that in this area of halacha, "the public" is defined as any group of three or more individuals, even if they are members of your family. If three or more people might walk down your front steps, and it would be dangerous if it turns to ice, this is considered a public hazard, and it is permitted to put down salt.

The Gerald & Karin Feldhamer OU Kosher Halacha Yomis

This column is dedicated in memory of: Rav Chaim Yisroel ben Reb Dov HaLevi Belsky, zt'l Senior OU Kosher Halachic Consultant from 1987-2016

From: **Rav Immanuel Bernstein**

<ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com> Date: Thu, Feb 17, 2022, 6:59 AM Subject: Dimensions in Ki Sisa DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH

Parshas Ki Sisa

Dancing around the Golden Calf

The tragic episode of making and worshipping the Golden Calf came to a traumatic head with the breaking of the luchos by Moshe Rabbeinu. Having received the luchos from Hashem, Moshe descended the mountain in order to give them to the Jewish People. However, when he reached the camp, he saw that the people had made the Golden Calf, and judged that they were not worthy to receive the luchos, whereupon he threw them down and smashed them into fragments.

There is a very basic problem here. While he was still on the mountain, Moshe was told by Hashem Himself that the Jewish People had made the calf, yet he nevertheless took the luchos and began his descent. He was, apparently, of the opinion that the making of the calf was not a critical impediment to the Jewish People receiving them. In that case, why, upon seeing the Golden Calf, did Moshe break the luchos? If he felt that the people were not deserving of them, he should have left the luchos on the mountain!

The Seforno explains that when Moshe was initially informed by Hashem that the people had made the Golden Calf, the verse reads:

סרו מהר מן הדרך אשר צויתם עשו להם עגל מסכה

They have strayed quickly from the path that I have commanded them; they have made for themselves a molten calf.”[1]

Moshe was thus aware that the people have sinned.

However, he reasoned that, as grievous as their sin may be, they could recover from it by him bringing down the luchos. Perhaps their sin was born of a moment of confusion or lack of direction over Moshe not being among them. As soon as they would see the luchos, they would snap out of it and be reminded of the correct path for them to be taking. This is why he took the luchos with him.

However, when Moshe approached the camp he saw the calf – which he had been told about – but he also saw something else that he had not been aware of. The verse reads:

ויהי כאשר קרב אל המחנה וירא את העגל ומחלת

It happened as he drew near the camp, he saw the calf and the dances.[2]

Moshe had been told that the people had made a calf. He did not know, however, that having made the calf, they then proceeded to dance around it.[3] This represents a completely different level of identification with their sin. They did not relate to it as a mistake at all. They were happy with it!

At this point, Moshe realized that merely seeing the luchos would not have any effect on the people. They were too far invested in their path of sin; with all the dancing they may not even have noticed Moshe or the luchos! The only course of action that could bring them back was to smash the luchos in front of them. The people would then be confronted with a drastic expression of how far they had strayed and what they potentially stood to lose.

There is a profound message in these words for those people who make mistakes, otherwise known as human beings. Having committed those acts, a stubborn and egocentric part of us is reluctant to recognize them as wrong, choosing instead to justify them and even idealize and dance around them. The Seforno is teaching us that whatever mistakes we may have made, we should be sure to maintain a sense of honesty about them, so that the sight of the luchos alone should be enough to bring us back, without anything having to be smashed in order to shake us out of our delusions.

The Thirteenth Attribute

וְנִקְּהָ לֹא יִנְקְהָ

And cleanses, though not completely.[4]

The sages of the Talmud,[5] cited by Rashi, expound these words as reflecting two conflicting ideas: “וְנִקְּהָ – He will cleanse,” and “לֹא יִנְקְהָ – He will not cleanse.” The resolution of this conflict is that it depends on whether the person does teshuvah: “He cleanses those who do teshuvah and does not cleanse those who don’t.”[6] Indeed, this interpretation is reflected in our communal practice when reciting the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy out loud, where we conclude the recitation with the word “וְנִקְּהָ”, and do not include the words that follow, as they reflect the negative outcome for one who does not do teshuvah.

Understandably, this matter requires some investigation, since the simple meaning of the words sees them as one integral phrase, “וְנִקְּהָ לֹא יִנְקְהָ,” why, then does the midrash state that they should be separated and treated as two opposing ideas?

In truth, however, the pshat approach which sees this as one phrase is quite difficult. Grammatically, as one phrase, this represents an absolute statement, which would mean “He does not completely cleanse [the person].” How does this statement, which comes only to limit the extent of Hashem’s mercy, reflect the concluding attribute of mercy? Moreover, is this even so? Can a person never be entirely cleansed of his sins, even if he does teshuvah?[7] For this reason, the sages adopt the drash approach and explain that the cleansing is not limited, but it is conditional, for it depends on the person doing teshuvah. If he does, however, he can be entirely cleansed, and it is to this that we refer by mentioning only the word “וְנִקְּהָ” in our recitation of the Divine Attributes. There is a fascinating idea related to this found in the early sources. There are two sets of “Thirteen Middos”: The Thirteen Middos (Attributes) of Divine Mercy and R’ Yishmael’s Thirteen Middos (midrashic principles) through which the Torah is expounded.[8] These sources state that there exists a parallel between these two sets of thirteen, so that involving oneself in one of the principles of drash helps activate the corresponding attribute of mercy – a most unusual application of the idea of “middah keneged middah”! The thirteenth and final exegetical principle states:

וכן שני כתובים המכחישים זה את זה עד שיבא הכתוב השלישי ויכריע ביניהם

Similarly, two verses that contradict each other, until a third verse comes and reconciles them.

And indeed, this is the very situation described by the final attribute of Mercy, which appears to contain “two conflicting verses” – the idea of Hashem cleansing and Him not cleansing – until the third “verse” comes to reconcile the contradiction, explaining that the matter is dependent on the person doing teshuvah![9]

[1] Shemos 32:8. [2] Ibid. verse 19. [3] Rav Yehuda Copperman, in his commentary to the Seforno, points out that this contrast is reflected by the fact that the word “הַעֲגֹל” is preceded with the letter heh, denoting a known entity, while the word “מְהֵלֵת” has no heh, as that element was not known to Moshe. [4] Shemos 34:7. [5] See Yoma 86a. [6] This is also the approach of Onkelos, who translates: “סלח לדתיבין לאורייתיה, ולדלא תיבין לא מזכי” – He forgives those who return to His Torah, but does not cleanse those who do not return.” [7] Rashi himself first offers a pshat approach, whereby Hashem does not entirely cleanse the person, but rather, exacts retribution from him little by little. However, even according to this explanation, Hashem does ultimately cleanse the person completely, He just does not do so immediately. This is already a departure from the absolute connotation of the negation contained within the pshat. For this reason, Rashi proceeds to cite the midrashic approach. [8] These are enumerated in the morning prayers just before pesukei de’zimra. [9] Bnei Yissaschar, Elul Maamar 2.

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Feb 17, 2022, 4:59 PM subject: Rav Frand - **The Secret of the Keshet Shel Tefillin**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1196. Taking a Choleh to the Hospital on Shabbos: You or a Non-Jew? Good

Shabbos! In Parshas Ki Sisa, Moshe asks to see the Glory of G-d (Shemos 33:18). Hashem's response was: "...I shall cause all My goodness to pass before you, and I shall call out with the Name Hashem before you; and I shall show favor when I shall show favor, and I shall have mercy when I shall have mercy... You shall not be able to see My Face, for no human can see My Face and live." (Shemos 33:19-20).

This seems like a strange dialog between Moshe Rabbeinu and the Ribono shel Olam. Rashi quotes a Gemara (Brochos 7a) that when Hashem passed over Moshe, Hashem showed Moshe the Tefillin knot on the back of His head Tefillin. We reference this incident in a line towards the end of Anym Zemiros: Keshar Tefillin her'ah l'anav (He showed the Tefillin knot to the humble one).

In fact, Rashi there in Maseches Brochos spells out this Talmudic allusion: This refers to the head Tefillin knot at the nape of the neck.)The Talmud in fact states elsewhere that Moshe did not understand what the knot at the back of the head Tefillin looked like, and the Ribono shel Olam showed him exactly how it looked.(

I saw a beautiful homiletic idea in a sefer. What does it mean that Moshe did not understand the knot of the Tefillin shel Rosh? Does it mean that he understood everything else about Tefillin perfectly, without needing to be shown what it looked like? Did he perfectly visualize a Tefillin bayis (compartment holding the parchment) or the knot of the hand Tefillin? What does it mean that he didn't understand what the knot of the Tefillin shel Rosh looked like?

Rav Firer says an interesting thing. Several times throughout Parshas Ki Sisa, Hashem complains about Klal Yisrael that they are a stiff-necked people (am k'shei oref). Let us pause and ask ourselves – is it a bad thing or a good thing to be a “stiff necked nation”? On the one hand, from the fact that the Ribono shel Olam keeps on complaining in this parsha that we are an am k'shei oref, it would seem to be a very bad thing. On the other hand, the stiff-neck property of the Jewish nation is one of the secrets of our continued existence. If we would not be stubborn, we would not have survived.

This is a classic example of one of the great truths of life, namely that there is no character trait (midah) that is either all good or all bad. Everything depends on how and where and when that midah is used. When the Ribono

shel Olam complains that Klal Yisrael is an am k'shei oref, it is an appropriate complaint. It reflects the fact that they were a rebellious and contentious people. They were a hard and argumentative nation, and they gave Moshe Rabbeinu and (as it were) the Almighty much grief. But on the other hand, thousands and thousands of Jews have persevered over the centuries in spite of untold persecutions. They were willing to die to sanctify G-d's Name. That is also a result of the fact that we are an am k'shei oref.

Rav Firer suggests—and there is an irony in this—that we place the Tefillin shel Rosh on the very spot that symbolizes our being an am k'shei oref (i.e., the back of the neck!) Moshe wanted to know over here—and the Ribono shel Olam was showing him—how we use the Keshar shel Tefillin:

To what is our characteristic of stubbornness bound? If we tie it to rebelliousness and heresy then it is a terrible thing. But if the midah of am k'shei oref is tied to the right thing—to mesiras nefesh and to perseverance and resilience—then it indeed becomes a beautiful characteristic.

The secret of the Keshar shel Tefillin is that the nature of this characteristic of stubbornness is entirely dependent on the aspect of our personalities to which it is bound. If it is bound to the right ideologies, it indeed becomes a tremendous thing.

This resolves a perplexing question. There are three pesukim in this parsha, in which the Almighty complains to Moshe Rabbeinu that Bnei Yisrael are a stiff-necked nation. But then, towards the end of the parsha—which we read on every public fast day—Moshe says: “If I have now found favor in Your eyes, my L-rd, may my L-rd please go in our midst – for it is a stiff-necked people, and may You forgive our iniquity and our error, and make us a portion.” (Shemos 34:9)

Does this make sense? The Ribono shel Olam is complaining over and over to Moshe Rabbeinu that the Jews are an am k'shei oref, which is tempting Him to destroy them all, yet Moshe Rabbeinu argues back that Hashem should stay with them BECAUSE they are an am k'shei oref! This seems illogical!

This is the secret that Moshe Rabbeinu just now learned. It all depends on what we do with that attribute. Moshe argues that the Almighty should stay with the Jewish people because the very fact that they are so stubborn is

the reason they will be willing to be moser nefesh for Him when the time comes.

This is the way it is with every Midah. There is no human character trait—be it jealousy or anger or hatred—that is only negative and destructive. There is a proper time and place to utilize all of these human emotions and character traits. “Everything has its season, and there is a time for everything under the heaven... A time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace” (Koheles 3:1-9)

So too, there is a time for stubbornness and a time for being soft. It just depends to what the attribute is bound, and that is the secret of the Keshet shel Tefillin.

Not the Cry of Battle, but Rather the Cry of “Anos”

Elsewhere in the parsha, there is another difficult pasuk to understand: “Yehoshua heard the sound of the people in their shouting, and he said to Moshe, ‘The sound of battle is in the camp.’ He said, ‘It is not the sound of shouting of might nor the sound of shouting of weakness, an ANOS sound do I hear.’” (Shemos 32:17-18).

Moshe and Yehoshua both heard loud screams coming from the location of the Israelite camp. Yehoshua suggested to Moshe that they were hearing battle sounds. Moshe disagreed: He told Yehoshua that they were hearing neither the sounds of military victory nor military defeat. They were the screams of ‘anos’. What is the simple interpretation of the expression Kol Anos? What does that mean?

In Masechet Taanis, the Talmud Yerushalmi says that Moshe responded somewhat critically to Yehoshua: The person who will one day be the leader of 600,000 Jews cannot discern the difference between one type of scream and another? What exactly was Moshe’s complaint to Yehoshua?

Rav Schwab shares a beautiful pshat in his sefer: Yehoshua heard these screams and he proclaimed: These are the screams of rebellion in the camp. These are the screams of people who have abandoned the Ribono shel Olam and have built an idolatrous Golden Calf. This is a revolt on the part of the people! That is the “Kol Milchama b’Machaneh.”

Moshe chastised him. “Yehoshua, as a future leader you need to understand the nature of this noise. These are not the screams of people who are victorious. These are not the screams of people who are weak. This is a ‘Kol Anos’”. (Rav Schwab says the word ‘Anos’ (ayin-nun-

vov-taf) is etymologically related to the word ‘enui’ (ayin-nun-vov-yud).) “It is the cry of people who are in pain. They are suffering and in pain because they don’t know what happened to me. They fear they have lost their leader. They are like a baby crying because it lost its mommy.” They are not rebelling against the Ribono shel Olam. They are screaming because they are scared and they don’t know where to turn.

This is a Kol Anos—a cry of pain, inui, and confusion. Moshe chastises Yehoshua for misreading the screams because a true Jewish leader needs to be able to discern the difference between a cry of rebellion and a cry of pain. A leader must be able to figure out the cause of the people crying.

This lesson applies to all of us as well. We as parents, or we as teachers must properly read what’s behind our children or our students acting out and misbehaving. It might look like an act of chutzpah or an act of rebellion but it may be something else. Sometimes that is not really the cause. The only way such “rebellion” can be redirected is by understanding the real cause.

Children sometimes say and do hurtful things. Our initial reaction might be “How dare they say that? This is out and out chutzpah and rebellion!” No! Sometimes something deeper is going on, and we need to know how to react. This is the mussar that Moshe Rabbeinu was giving to Yehoshua: “The one who is destined to be a leader over 600,000 Jews does not know how to distinguish between one type of cry and another?!”

Understanding what is really behind the cry is the only way a leader will ever be able to set the people straight.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem

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**When Protest Must Be Raised
By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser -**

16 Adar I 5782 – February 17, 2022

Yehoshua heard the sound of the people shouting, and he said to Moshe: There is a sound of battle in the camp!”

But Moshe said: It is neither a voice shouting strength [victory], nor a voice shouting weakness [defeat]; I hear a voice of distress.” (Shemos 32:17-18)

Rashi translates the “voice of distress” as one of blasphemy, which distresses the soul of one who hears it.

Was Yehoshua trying to prevent Moshe Rabbeinu from learning that the Jewish nation had sinned with the Golden Calf? Did he think he would be able to hide it forever? Obviously, when Moshe would enter the camp he would see the Golden Calf with his own eyes and understand how unfortunate the situation truly was.

What was the meaning of Moshe Rabbeinu’s answer? Why didn’t he just tell Yehoshua that he had already heard about the Jewish nation’s transgression from Hashem Himself, and there was no reason to hide the truth from him?

The Chasam Sofer explains that Moshe Rabbeinu descended disheartened from the mountain, cognizant of the fact that the Jewish people had committed a sin that would be difficult to forgive. It was in this state of mind that he encountered his disciple, Yehoshua, who certainly had no intention of hiding the sin from his teacher, Moshe. Their dialogue, in fact, focused on another aspect of the situation entirely.

Yehoshua tried to offer a measure of comfort to Moshe and said, “Undoubtedly, the sin is egregious and the situation is very bleak. However, ‘there is a sound of battle in the camp!’” – meaning: There are those who are protesting and zealously defending the honor of Hashem. But Moshe’s pain was not assuaged. He said, “This is not the dissenting outcry of zealots; this is the horrifying voice of blasphemy raised by those who are involved in the sin.” There was, in fact, no dissension – which increased the enormity of the sin – and therefore Moshe Rabbeinu had to break the luchos.

We learn that it was the lack of any opposition or disapproval that aggravated the magnitude of the sin of the Golden Calf. Individuals who could have used their influence and clout to try to dissuade the masses from sinning failed to do so. We have an obligation to speak out when actions and situations require such a response. Rabbi Shabse Yudelevitz notes that although the sin of the Golden Calf was specific to that generation, every

generation has its own potential chet ha’eigel, which manifests itself in various forms, often galvanized by disinformation. The only way to avert disaster is by confronting the situation and vigorously presenting a reality check.

The Talmud (Sotah 11a) relates that three people were consulted by Pharaoh about what to do with the Jewish people – Bilaam, Iyov and Yisro – and each presented their opinion. Bilaam, who advised Pharaoh to kill all the sons that were born to the Jewish people, was punished by being killed in the war with Midyan. Iyov, who was silent, and neither advised nor protested, was punished by suffering. Yisro, who ran away as a sign of protest, merited that some of his children’s children sat in the Sanhedrin.

The Gry”z (R’ Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik) explains that Iyov remained silent because he believed that any protest he made would be of no consequence. Iyov, in fact, was a very influential advisor to the king and his words would have made an impact, even if they had not been accepted. A person who is suffering cries out in pain even though he knows that it will not help. If one is quiet, it indicates that the matter at hand does not concern him.

In the late 1800s, the Maskilim (members of the Haskalah movement in Europe who intended to modernize Jews and Judaism by encouraging the adoption of secular European culture) channeled their influence with the Hungarian government to have a law passed that all Jewish boys must go to school and learn Hungarian and other secular subjects. Then they attempted to influence the government to found separate Jewish schools in which the Jewish children could learn from Jewish teachers.

The Kedushas Yom Tov (R’ Chananya Yom Tov Lipa Teitelbaum, Grand Rebbe of Sighet) opposed this plan, saying it was better to go to secular school than to learn from “enlightened” Jewish teachers who would eventually lead the children astray. The schools were built throughout Hungary, but in Marmarosh, the Kedushas Yom Tov’s clout prevailed and no secular Jewish schools were built there during his lifetime.

Once the mayor of Sighet came to the Kedushas Yom Tov’s house to discuss the matter with him.

“Isn’t it a sin,” asked the mayor, “for a Jewish child to sit with an uncovered head?”

“Yes,” said the Kedushas Yom Tov.

“In the secular schools the Jewish children are forced to sit with uncovered heads,” said the mayor, “but we are giving you permission to build a separate Jewish school in Sighet. The children can cover their heads, and keep every detail of the Torah. Why won’t you agree to save them from sin?”

“Whatever sins the child does in the secular school,” answered the Kedushas Yom Tov, “he is forced to do, and Hashem will not hold it against him. We need not fear that what he sees there will make an impression on him and cause him to act that way for the rest of his life, because he knows that the teacher is not a Jew. Although he learns secular subjects from him, it will not occur to him to learn from the teacher anything relating to religion. As far as religion, his home will be the sole influence on him.

“But if the teacher is Jewish, the child will have a certain respect for him and see him as wiser than his own father, since his father does not know these secular subjects. He will absorb the teacher’s views on religion as well, which will stay with him for his whole life. These teachers tend to be heretical, or at least critical of our ancient beliefs and traditions. Their influence on our children would be far worse than a child sitting in class with his head uncovered.”

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, a prominent rav and Torah personality, is a daily radio commentator who has authored over a dozen books, and a renowned speaker recognized for his exceptional ability to captivate and inspire audiences worldwide.

YUTorah <office@yutorah.org> Thu, Feb 17, 2022 at 8:01 PM

Thoughts for Ki Tisa: **Returning to the Grand Stage** **Rabbi Moshe Taragin**

The circumstances were dire. Weeks after pledging allegiance to Hashem we debased ourselves, frolicking around a calf fashioned from gold. The crashing sounds at Sinai announced a bold new message: G-d had no face and wasn’t physical or visual. Sadly, we corrupted this powerful idea by bowing to a human-sculpted creature. Rightfully, Hashem planned to replace us with a new nation—more intrepid and better suited to represent Him in this world.

Moshe intercedes, heroically and desperately pleading for our survival. First, he reminds Hashem of the great

founders of our people and of their historical covenant. They alone, took the great leap of faith, rising from the darkness of an ancient world cursed by savagery and muddled by religious confusion. The grandchildren of these visionaries deserve a second chance—and a third, and a fourth. Covenants are forever. They outlast betrayal and infidelity.

While praying, Moshe asserts a second appeal on our behalf. More than four centuries had been invested in a grand project of forming the nation of G-d. This nascent movement began to spread—from lone ideologues to an entire clan—and ultimately to an entire nation, three and a half million strong. Finally, after 2500 years of doubt, G-d was manifest in this world—through a community of humans which acknowledged Him.

All this religious progress was now jeopardized. To eliminate that nation, after so much investment, would have reversed hundreds of years of religious innovation. The Egyptians would, G-d forbid, mock and sneer, snickering that Hashem was powerless to steward the Jews through the desert or to deliver them to their homeland. Why else would he annihilate his beloved people? Religious skeptics would shrink Hashem to “one amongst many” ancient deities. If the Jews perished in the desert, the presence of Hashem would take a “hit, and would retreat from this world. This tragedy is called a *chilul Hashem*, and could not be tolerated. Perhaps we didn’t deserve to be spared, but we are the people of G-d and our condition in this world directly reflects directly upon His presence. This terrible worry about a potential *chilul Hashem* carried the day, and ultimately, Hashem offered us repentance and reconciliation.

As the chosen people, we bear enormous weight, and we wield mighty influence upon religious history. G-d spans all reality, but we hold the key to His presence on this planet. Through our behavior we can augment or diminish that presence. Throughout history, we valiantly defended His presence even to the point of martyrdom. Swords and fire could not defeat our great faith, nor could aggression and hatred conquer the bold religious ideas we introduced to humanity.

Of course, Judaism has no death wish and we prefer to sanctify His presence through life, rather than through blood. Through our religious lifestyles we model His will. We showcase the merit of a “godly” life of

commandment, morality, conscience, family and community.

During a long and dark period of history we abdicated the privilege of this “modeling”. For the past two thousand years we lived in a dreary tunnel of history. We were pushed aside to the margins of society, no longer inhabiting the front stage of history. Very few took notice of our "godly lifestyles". We were depicted as historical castaways. When people did take notice of us, it was, typically, with rabid anger and venomous contempt. We had forfeited the opportunity to represent G-d through life, and were often called upon to represent him through death. History has shifted. We have returned to prominence and to historical relevance. Society has welcomed us back, offering us influence and opportunity. They haven't been disappointed. We have spearheaded modernity, revolutionizing our world while spreading prosperity. We have driven the advance of science, reason, technology, culture, economics and philosophy. We have offered the world our best light and, in doing so, have represented Hashem well.

But not always. This newfound prominence has come at a steep price. Sadly, many Jews in public roles, haven't always risen to the occasion, and haven't always acted as children of G-d. As a people it has yet to fully sink in: After centuries of living on the fringes of society we haven't yet learned the consequences of living on the big stage. The world is once again paying attention to us, and we don't always acquit ourselves well. We haven't yet fully understood the connotations of the historical moment.

Our moral failures tarnish the presence of Hashem. We may not bow to gold idols, but modern society provides plenty of idolatrous temptations which have entrapped us. We must do a better job educating consciousness of this new reality. We live in a different era, and we can't enter positions of leadership or public influence without realizing that our personal conduct impacts the presence of Hashem.

In previous generations Jews were nervous about creating a "shander" (literally “shame” in Yiddish) or disgracing our people. Living in a fragile post-Holocaust world, we stood on shaky ground. We reasoned: better not rock the boat or cause shame and undue attention.

Thankfully, our community is well beyond the "shander" syndrome. Today buoyant Jewish communities rightfully

feel confident and relatively secure. We shouldn't strive for moral behavior based on fear of “shander”.

Firstly, acting with conscience and conviction is crucial even if no one is paying attention. However the world is paying attention we must represent Hashem more capably and more nobly than we often do.

Something else has changed. Not only have Jews been restored to the societal "stage", but our national identity has been reconstituted in Israel. Blessed with a state and with a homeland, we have crafted a democracy, a military superpower, and a bustling economy, winning us well-deserved international admiration. These accomplishments augment Hashem's presence, as his ascendent people have bucked the odds and built a masterpiece.

Having shifted into a world in which we glorify his name at a state level, we carry even greater responsibility to reinforce this message at an individual level. We can't dream of national representation of G-d if we don't reflect that message in our personal lives.

One day all of humanity will gather in Jerusalem and herald G-d and His people. Let us not wait for that day. Through our conduct we are building that Jerusalem. We better not wreck that city with dishonesty or moral weakness

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Mentioning a Pasuk at the End Of Shemonei Esrei
Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits

KOF-K Kosher Supervision

Many siddurim have a list of pesukim that correspond to one's name, which are meant to be recited at the end of

Shemoneh Esrei. What is the nature of this practice? When is the proper time to say the pasuk? Should women say it as well? What should a person do if his name does not appear on this list (which is common for people with more modern names)? These questions will be addressed in this article.

The Source The custom of saying a pasuk corresponding to one's name at the end of Shemoneh Esrei is not mentioned in the Gemara or Shulchan Aruch.¹

However, it is mentioned by some poskim. The Elya Rabbah³ says that this custom is found in the Beis

the wicked. Moshe followed this entreaty with a second supplication, "Show me now Your glory" (Shemos 33:18), which expressed his desire to grasp the true essence of Hashem and nature of His existence (Rambam Yesodei Hatorah 1:10). These are of course critical theological questions that are undoubtably worthy of much contemplation and curiosity, but why are they relevant to a negotiation about forgiveness? How would understanding the answers to these questions on a personal level transform Moshe into a more effective spokesperson and ambassador for a people who surely erred?

Rav Yerucham Levovitz (Daas Torah) suggests that by making these personal requests Moshe was attempting to coax Hashem into absolving the Jewish people. The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy begin "Hashem, Hashem", and the Gemara (Rosh Hashana 17b) interprets, "I am Hashem before the sin, and I am Hashem after the sin." Moshe interacted with Hashem "face to face" and was certainly well acquainted with the dimension of Hashem's mercy that exists prior to sin, but now he was asking to experience Hashem's more potent and powerful form of kindness by witnessing Hashem's forgiveness after the sin. In order to grant Moshe's personal appeal for greater spiritual understanding Hashem was obliged to reveal the depths of His mercy by forgiving the Jewish people. Moshe's strategy teaches us that sincere requests for personal spiritual growth are always granted, and ironically, the more a person struggles to understand and the more distant he feels, the more likely Hashem is to respond.

The Medrash (Shir Hashirim Rabba 5:2) states, "Hashem says to Bnei Yisrael, my son, open for me a hole the size of a needle and I will open for you an opening that wagons and chariots can pass through." This seems to underscore the importance of making the initial move in the process of teshuvah, for even small steps can unlock a disproportionate amount of Divine assistance. However, according to Rav Yerucham, the Medrash also intends to convey that just like when one pokes a hole in a vessel, it now has a void that needs to be filled, so too if we create a deficiency in our heart, if we demonstrate that we are missing something in our relationship with Hashem, that vacuum itself opens and unleashes the potential for greater closeness and dveikus. After numerous attempts, Moshe realized that the most effective way to persuade

Hashem to forgive Bnei Yisrael was by focusing on his own lack of knowledge and desire for greater spiritual discovery, because Hashem is committed to fulfilling those requests.

Therefore, an essential step in curating a fertile religious mindset is digging holes and opening spaces wherein the seeds of spirituality can sprout and flourish. The stones that rested in the breastplate of the Kohen Gadol are described as "filling stones" (Shemos 25:7) because they "filled" the indented settings that were carved into the gold. However, each of these priceless gemstones had its own unique beauty and color, how then can they rightly be reduced to simple space fillers? Perhaps the Torah overlooks the value of the stones and emphasizes instead the cavities which they occupied in order to indicate that Hashem's presence can only fit into our lives if we first hollow out space for Him. If we are satisfied and content with our religious status and spiritual intensity there is no room or reason for further development. Only if we feel some sense of emptiness, only if there is a gap between our current state and our desired destination, can Hashem enter our hearts and fill our souls.

The Gemara (Yevamos 79a) establishes that "there are three marks of the Jewish people. They are merciful, they are shamefaced, and they perform acts of kindness." The Baal Shem Tov traces these defining characteristics back to the three avos. Avraham epitomized kindness (Michah 7:20), Yitzchak represents fear and shame (Breishis 31:42), and Yaakov corresponds to mercy, which sits at the intersection between kindness and fear. However, we are told that at the time of Maamad Har Sinai, Moshe said to Bnei Yisrael, "Be not afraid, for Hashem has come only ... in order that the fear of Hashem may be ever with you so that you do not go astray" (Shemos 20:17). The Gemara (Nedarim 20a) infers from this pasuk that "one who does not have the capacity to be shamefaced it is known that his forefathers did not stand at Har Sinai." This implies that the Jewish attribute of shame was not inherited from the avos but rather developed later as a product of the experience of Maamad Har Sinai. The contradiction about the origins of Jewish shame leads Rav Yaakov of Izhbitzh (Beis Yaakov, Yisro) to distinguish between two types of shame. There is one kind of shame that exists after a sin or mistake. The avos ingrained within the Jewish psyche to instinctively be embarrassed when they commit an aveirah, even in

private, while other nations tend to resist feelings of guilt until it is forced upon them. However, there is a second form of shame that isn't prompted by a specific sin or failure but rather is a function of the ongoing disappointment with the status quo. At the time of Maamad Har Sinai, when we encountered the unbridled revelation of Hashem's presence, we also accessed our own potential for holiness and transcendence. Subsequently, upon returning to regular life, we now confront an inherent sense of shame about the disparity between the normal and ideal states. However, it is precisely this frustration with our reality that opens the door for progress and change.

Similarly, Rav Yaakov of Izhbitzh (Beis Yaakov, Noach) suggests that a drunk is prohibited from davening (Brochos 31a) because intoxication relaxes inhibitions and induces serenity, as the Gemara (Yoma 75a) states, "whoever casts his eye on his cup, the whole world seems to him like level ground." Prayer demands a certain uneasiness, a healthy sense of apprehension about the status quo, because in that tension lies the impetus for all improvement and growth. When one feels completely satisfied and content, ironically, prayer has no traction. A similar notion is expressed by the Gemara (Chagigah 13a) which establishes that the secrets of Torah may only be shared with one "whose heart inside him is concerned" about his sins and desires to repent. Rav Tzadok Hakohen (Pri Tzaddik, Beshalach) explains that intimate knowledge of Hashem can only be attained by someone who first appreciates and is worried about the distance between his current state of affairs and the expectations the Ribbono Shel Olam has for him.

In his Kuntres Hahispaalus, the Mittlerer Rebbe, Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch, records that he heard from his saintly father in the name of the holy Maggid of Mezeritch, that it is impossible for a person to absorb the secrets of the Torah and grasp the true depth of the light of Hashem unless he possesses an innate tendency towards "mara shchora" - "melancholia". This statement should not be taken as a glorification or sanctification of sadness and depression, for these traits can be unhealthy and harmful and indeed, they are an impediment to becoming an effective and successful ovoid Hashem.[1] Rather, the Maggid is describing a spiritual longing and aspiration for what we could have been and what we need to become. The cushy couch of confident complacency

doesn't leave much room for extrospection and introspection. Only when there is some frustration with the status quo, some tension with our current reality, can the light of Hashem begin to break through.

[1]See Shaarei Kedusha 2, 4 and Likkutei Moharan 282 and Tinyana 10.

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Peninim on the Torah

by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Parashas Ki Sisa ב פרשת כי תשא

ותתנו איש כפר נפשו Every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul. (30:12) The Baal HaTurim observes that the word, v'nasnu: vov, nun, saf, nun, vov, is a palindrome (in this instance, a word which reads the same backward as forward). This prompts him to posit that one who gives to tzedakah, charity, does not lose his contribution; rather, he receives it back. Hashem sees to it that one's good deeds are not forgotten. What he gives to others will eventually be returned to him. Horav Mordechai Ilan, zl, notes another palindrome in the Torah: V'hikeihu, "And he will strike him" (Bereishis 32:9), which refers to Eisav's striking one of Yaakov Avinu's camps. Vov, hay, kuf, hay, vov. He explains that one who strikes us will receive just punishment from Hashem, measure for measure. This concept has been a source of hope and solace to our people amid the travail that has accompanied us throughout our exile. If I may add that the mitzvah of giving shekalim, requiring every Jew to give a half-shekel, makes him realize that, even when he gives a "whole" donation, he is but a "half." Only when unity reigns among Jews does one become whole; consequently, one who "gives" will be protected from Eisav striking out against him. The word v'nasnu, they shall give, applies to a unique form of gift. The word matanah, gift, applies to a bestowal on our fellow under such circumstances that the benefactor receives nothing in return and needs nothing from the beneficiary. It is pure giving for the sake of giving assistance, a tribute, an act of philanthropy. The benefactor sees someone who is in need, and, out of the goodness of his heart, he is happy to oblige and offer his gift. Such a v'nasnu, through which the only one who benefits is the beneficiary, has the power to protect and withstand Eisav's v'hikahu. When

one is blessed by Hashem, he must realize that it is a gift for a purpose. Hashem does not provide His panacea to v'hikahu unless it is preceded by a whole-hearted v'nasnu. Horav Yosef Shaul Nattenson, zl, author of the Shoel U'Maeshiv, was Rav of Lvov. He once went with his brother-in-law, Horav Mordechai Zev, to solicit funds for pidyon shevuyim, to pay ransom, secure the release of a fellow Jew taken captive by slave traders or robbers or imprisoned unjustly. Sadly, this was not an uncommon occurrence. The wicked gentiles who preyed on Jews were acutely aware that Jews are benevolent and would pay for their brother's release, and they took advantage of it. They stopped at the home of Rav Hershel Bernstein, a prodigious philanthropist, who happily supported many causes. The well-known benefactor was ecstatic to see them, and he insisted that they have lunch with him. As a caveat, he would donate all of the necessary ransom. He loved guests, especially such distinguished personages, and he felt it was neither appropriate nor dignified that two such illustrious rabbanim spend their day knocking on doors seeking contributions. A meal with two such Torah giants revolves around Torah. In this case, they focused on the significance of the mitzvah of pidyon shevuyim. When Rav Hershel heard the topic, he said, "I cannot add divrei Torah to such profound thoughts with which their honors are enhancing this meal, but I can share an exceptional, inspiring story – indeed the story which was the harbinger of my wealth. When I was a young man, I studied Torah and was supported by my father-in-law. When the time came for me to go out on my own, I traveled to Leshkowitz, to the great market, to invest, buy and sell, in order to support my growing family. I had four hundred gold coins in my possession. My goal was to purchase precious stones and resell them at a profit. "I arrived at the market to see thousands of sellers, brokers and buyers, all engrossed in the business of making money. As I stood by the gateway to the market, I chanced upon a woman who was weeping bitterly. "How can I help you?" I asked. "What is wrong?" She replied that her daughter had been promised in marriage to a young man. She had promised a dowry of four hundred gold coins which she did not have. She feared that the marriage would be called off, and her daughter would be shamed. She was a young widow with no visible means of support. My heart went out to her, so I gave her the money that I had brought along to invest.

This was the sum total of my material assets. "For the sake of curiosity, I walked around the market. Who knows what I would venture to find? As I was walking, a man approached, and, in his hand, he had the most beautiful coral beads. I knew jewelry, and I was partial to precious stones, but I had never come across such beauty. 'Would you like to purchase these beads?' he asked. 'I have no money to invest,' I replied. 'You look like a trustworthy person. I will give it to you on credit. When you sell it, you will remember me.' Interestingly, the price he asked was four hundred gold pieces. I sold it immediately at three times its price and made a handsome profit. I returned to the man and paid him off. He was so impressed that he showed me more jewelry which cost me one thousand gold pieces. What did I have to lose? I had the money. I bought and sold, making a large profit. The next day, when I paid him his thousand gold pieces, he sold me jewelry for six thousand gold pieces. Once again, I made an incredible profit. When I returned the next morning to reimburse the man for his jewelry, he was nowhere to be found. No one had any idea who he was or where he had gone. I have never been able to locate him. I am certain, however, that Hashem had rewarded me for the mitzvah of hachnasas kallah, helping a young bride to get married. I saved this girl the shame of a broken match. Hashem repaid me multiple times over."

וְאַתָּה קַח לְךָ בְּשָׂמִים רֵאשׁוֹן Now you, take for yourself choice spices. (30:23) The Ohr HaChaim observes that the command to Moshe Rabbeinu regarding the Shemen HaMishchah, anointing oil, is different from the other commands concerning the construction of the Mishkan. Regarding the other aspects of the Mishkan, Hashem spoke to Moshe in second person. His intention, however, was that Moshe convey His instructions to a surrogate to perform the actual work. Not so concerning the anointing oil which, in this case, Hashem wanted Moshe to produce from ingredients which Moshe himself would donate. While the original call to donate the various items needed for the construction of the Mishkan included Moshe as well, this time it was directed to him exclusively. What was it about the Shemen HaMishchah that required Moshe's personal involvement from purchase to production? Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, explains that the key lies in the purpose of the anointing oil. This oil was

to anoint and to sanctify all the utensils of the Mishkan. As such, for the most part, the oil did not have its own purpose. It was, however, an enabler that empowered the other utensils to function in the Mishkan. The creation of a product to sanctify physical entities with a degree of holiness that allows them to serve and function in the Mishkan is no small contrivance. It requires that its initiator be one of impeccable moral, ethical and spiritual accomplishment – in other words, someone no less the caliber of Moshe Rabbeinu, who had achieved a level of holiness that was the envy of even the Heavenly angels. In fact, the original oil which Moshe made remained with the nation forever; it was never replaced. A similar lesson may be extrapolated concerning teaching Torah and the quality of character that should be inherent in everyone who acts as a vehicle for Torah transmission. Growth in Torah is intimately connected with holiness. Thus, it makes sense that the one who is the conduit (the rebbe) for teaching Torah should reflect personal sanctity and impeccable character. He is the anointing oil that will empower his students to grow into enablers. A rebbe must not only be erudite, his deeds and attributes must parallel his Torah knowledge. This is certainly the standard by which our rebbeim have lived and taught Torah. They were not only scholars; they were the embodiment of everything the Torah expected of a person of their calling. They are not the only ones who impart the Torah weltanschauung to us. These are also parents who teach by example and who, for the most part, are a child's first mentors. Horav Mattisyahu Solomon, Shlita, writes that following a talk that he gave to a group of young men, one of them remarked that he had never seen his father not wearing a shirt. This comment was considered quite praiseworthy by the other men in the group. The venerable Mashgiach was appalled at their reaction, almost as if it were a common occurrence for children to see their fathers prancing around in their tee-shirts or other stages of undress. How low have we descended if dignity is measured on the barometer of how coarse one presents himself in the privacy of his own home? Chazal teach (Sotah 36b) that Yosef refrained from sinning with Potiphar's wife as a result of seeing d'mus d'yukno shel aviv, the image of his father's face, appearing before his eyes. This image had been seared into his mind for twenty-two years! What images do we present to our children for posterity? Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, makes an

intriguing (almost frightening) observation. D'mus d'yukno shel aviv is a mechayeiv, compels the father to present himself in such a manner that his d'mus d'yukno will leave a lasting impression on his children. To put it in ordinary vernacular: How do we want to be remembered? Sitting with a sefer and learning, or acting in a manner best suited for a bar? Yosef was filled with shame – a shame that prevented him from committing a terrible sin, only because he saw his father's image before him. Can we say the same? The Torah thus requires of us that our children see us with full dignity. This concept applies under all circumstances – even intimate family settings. Children remember what they see, and it might come back to haunt us! The Gerrer Rebbe, Horav Pinchas Menachem Alter, zl, was the youngest child, the ben zekunim, of his father, the saintly Imrei Emes, zl. The Pnei Menachem once said, "From the time I was three years old, I did not forget even one thing that my father told me or one action that I saw him do." Everything that he saw became seared into the future Rebbe's phenomenal memory, never to be forgotten. The Pnei Menachem learned one of the most important lessons that his father taught him when he was child. He had noticed the Baal HaTurim's commentary to the phrase describing Yosef's relationship with Yaakov Avinu: "He was a ben zekunim." The Baal HaTurim writes that the word zekunim is an acronym for the various orders of the mishnayos. The Torah alludes to the idea that Yaakov taught Yosef various orders of Mishnayos: zayin = Zeraim; kuf = Kodshim; nun = Nashim; yud = Yeshuos (which is another name for Nezikin); and mem = Moed. The young boy made an obvious observation to his father: One seder is glaringly missing – Seder Taharos – which deals with laws of purity. His father's reply remained with him for the rest of his life, "When it involves purity, you must attain it on your own! One cannot achieve that pinnacle of avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty, simply from learning with his father! That is a level that requires much personal endeavor and sacrifice." The Pnei Menachem understood that yichus, illustrious pedigree, does not imbue one with purity. If he wanted to achieve and make his mark, he would have to work very hard and yearn for it.

ויהי כאשר קרב אל המחנה וירא את העגל ומחלת ויחר אף משה וישלך מידו את הלוחות וישבר אותם

It happened that as he drew near the camp and saw the calf and the dances, Moshe's anger flared up. He threw down the Tablets from his hands and shattered them. (32:19) Hashem had informed Moshe Rabbeinu that the nation had sinned egregiously, so that he should descend the mountain and return to his people. What novel lesson did Moshe learn when he returned that provoked him to shatter the Luchos? Why did he wait so long? Simply, we might suggest that while he certainly believed Hashem, the matter was not yet engraved on his heart that the nation would be guilty of such treason. It is one thing to believe in Hashem unequivocally; it is another thing to be prepared to shatter the Luchos as a result of this belief. Seeing the sin in its complete depravity demonstrated to Moshe that the nation was seriously morally impaired. Rashi, however, informs us that Moshe was motivated to shatter the Luchos by a kal v'chomer (lenient and strict, whereby we derive one law from the other, applying the logic that, if a case which is generally strict has a particular leniency, a case which is generally lenient will certainly have that leniency). Moshe reasoned, "If Pesach, which is only one mitzvah, does not permit a ben neichar, one who is strange to Jewish law, to partake of it, certainly one who rejects the Torah, the entire corpus of Jewish law and observance, does not deserve the Luchos." Thus, we see that Moshe had applied his analytical reasoning to deduce that shattering the Luchos was not only correct- it was mandatory. Horav Shmuel Berenbaum, zl, explains that Moshe understood the human psyche's deference to the wiles and ploys of the yetzer hora, evil inclination, through which it attempts to drive a wedge between us and Hashem. Thus, when Moshe heard that the nation had sinned, he attempted to ameliorate their iniquitous actions by conjecturing that the people were looking for something. Satan provided that something – a medium, a powerful entity which appeared godlike in their eyes, with mystical powers that were the product of the kochos ha'tumah, powers of impurity, which are very real. True, they had sinned, but it was not their fault. They fell for Satan's gambit. When Moshe descended the mountain, however, and came face to face with a molten calf, around which the people were unabashed, dancing and acting in the most reprehensible manner, he broke the Luchos. Perhaps Satan put the bug

in their minds, but the deterioration was purely their own fault. There was nothing beguiling about the Golden Calf. It was the depravity of the people that should be condemned. How could they debase themselves to such a nadir after having just experienced the greatest Revelation of all time? The Rosh Yeshivah explains this with a practical analogy. A ben Torah who had heretofore spent years studying full time in kollel decided to leave the bastion of Torah and enter the world of commerce. His reason: his financial straits were choking him. He could not do this any longer. A few years passed, during which he had successfully navigated the world of commerce and now enjoyed the fruits of his labors: beautiful home, expensive car, children attending the finest schools and camps, clothing no longer an issue. Life was great. It is understandable that he might have felt that his decision to leave the bais hamedrash was practical. However, his counterpart had also left the yeshivah, but sadly did not make it; still lived with his large family in a basement apartment, scrounging for food, wearing second-hand clothing, with little hope for his financial future. To leave the yeshivah and have nothing to show for his troubles, not to be able to give a fortune to tzedakah, charity, but instead, be the one who is on the receiving end, is deplorable. Regarding him we could ask: Why did you leave, and what did you benefit from leaving? When Moshe descended and saw the deplorable calf, he was shocked how the people could have acted so foolishly, as to exchange Hashem Yisborach for such an absurdity. If they would have at least in some way gained – nu – but now they had exchanged everything for absolutely nothing. As a result, Moshe shattered the Luchos. The people did not deserve them. We should ask ourselves this question: For what are we exchanging Torah learning? Are we giving it up for frivolity and sham pleasure? If we are, we are truly piteous.

Dedicated in memory of משה בן שמואל ז"ל Krilov
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