

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS KI TISAH - 5756

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"Project Genesis <genesis@j51.com>" " Project Genesis LifeLine
Subject: * PG LifeLine - Ki Sisa

It is still too early to have reliable information from Israel about the last days of Rabbi Pinchas Menachem Alter zt"l (of Blessed memory), the Rebbe of Gur. The following - though from a very reliable source - is hearsay, and undoubtedly a correction will follow. But this, at any rate, is what I have heard:

In Jerusalem, Purim is on the fifteenth of Adar, and Rabbi Alter spoke that day to his Chassidim (at the "Purim Tisch"). He spoke about the Mitzvah to destroy Amalek, and about King Shaul who came so close to fulfilling this Mitzvah. Then he spoke about the end of Shaul's life. Shaul went to a sorceress, to have the prophet Shmuel, who had anointed him King, brought up from the dead. Our sources explain that the sorceress was a mere charlatan, but she cried out in shock when Shmuel did indeed arise.

Shmuel then said to Shaul, "tomorrow, you and your sons will be with me"

[Shmuel 1 28:19], meaning that they were going to die and join Shmuel in Heaven. Apparently, the Rabbi offered this explanation: that Shmuel was telling Shaul that it was time for him to die, for a new generation had begun. Rabbi Alter said that a leader must fit his generation, and when the generation changes, HaShem must see to it that the leader changes as well.

It seems that no one could understand why Rabbi Alter was explaining or emphasizing this...

That night, he went to bed after saying to his wife "Shalom, Shalom, Shalom." According to her, he never did this before.

That night, Rabbi Alter passed away suddenly at the age of 69. May his memory be for a blessing.

"Each person who passes to be numbered, from age twenty, shall give a half-shekel, from a shekel of the Temple... a donation to HaShem." [30:13]

The Medrash says, "Rabbi Meir said, the Holy One, Blessed be He, brought out from beneath his throne of Glory a coin of fire, and showed it to Moshe, and said to him, like this shall they give."

The Noam Elimelech explains why HaShem showed Moshe a coin of fire. When handling money, he explains, one should remember that a coin is very much like fire. Just as fire can burn and destroy, but can also warm, and cook, and serve in other valuable ways, so too a coin. If one gives a coin for a good purpose, for charity or kindness, then it is very valuable and helpful to a person; but if a person uses his money improperly, then the same coin can burn and cause serious harm.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l, the leading Jewish legal authority of our generation, passed away on the thirteenth of Adar II, 1986 - meaning his tenth Yahrzeit has just passed. He also comments on this Medrash.

He asks the following question: why did G-d have to show Moshe a coin at all? Why was it so difficult for Moshe to understand the size of a half-shekel? The verse says that a shekel was 20 geirah, a known amount, so it should have been easy to determine a half-shekel.

Rabbi Feinstein explains that Moshe could not understand how people living in a materialistic world could involve themselves with spiritual pursuits. HaShem showed him a half-shekel to show him that a person should divide his time: only half of a person's efforts can be devoted to material gain; the spiritual side must be cared for as well. The division also shows a middle ground -- a person living in this world also cannot be so overwhelmed with spirituality that he ignores his material needs. It is crucial to find a balance.

This has been another week of tragic losses for the Jewish people. May we share only happy occasions in the future!
Good Shabbos, Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"Dovid Hoffman <dhoffman@clark.net>" " ravfrand@torah.org"
Rabbi Frand on Parshas Ki Sisa

Leave the Worrying to -- Avinu In Shamayim

The pasuk [verse]at the end of this weeks 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 in Jerusalem - on Pessach, 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 verses is that the primary thrust of the command is to be "Oleh Regel". As a secondary point, the Torah informs us that there is no need to fear while one is away from home performing this mitzvah, because no one will covet the land.

However, there is also a deeper message. The Talmud says in Pesachim [8b] that one who owns no land in Eretz Yisroel, is exempt from the command of making the Festival Pilgrimage. With such a person we cannot apply the verse "no man will covet your land".

This seems grossly unfair. Why should someone be exempt from "Being Seen by 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 verse uses a strange expression: "Three times in the year, all males should appear before the Master (haAdon), Hashem..." The expression Adon Hashem is a very uncommon usage. In fact, the only other place in Chumash where this expression is found is in Parshas Mishpatim [23:17], again in connection with this same mitzvah of going up to Jerusalem on the Festivals.

The Sforno in Parshas Mishpatim says that the use of the word Adon alludes to the fact that G-d 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 owns everything.

With this Sforno, we understand a new insight into the mitzvah of

Aliyah l'regel. The mitzvah is not merely to go up to Jerusalem and have a Yom Tov in the presence of and under the influence of the Beis Hamikdash. The purpose of the mitzvah is to emphasize that I can leave my house and 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's not mine to worry about -- it's G-d's land. He will worry about it. He will take care of it.

When one returns a rental car, he merely drives up to the return stand, drops off the keys and drives away. Must he worry what will happen to the car? Avis worries about that! It's their car.

So too, when one goes to Jerusalem on the Festival, the reason one does not worry about the Land is because one is testifying that G-d is the Master of the Land, and He will take care of it.

Consequently, one who does not have land, can not participate in this mitzvah, because he cannot demonstrate this confidence in G-d's ownership of the land through his traveling to Jerusalem.

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

Gentiles Won't Covet Our Land If They Recognize Us to be 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 G-d, in fact, performs a miracle. The reason no one will covet our land is because G-d will miraculously see to it that such coveting will not take place during this time. However, the Mikdash Mordechai suggests that perhaps this phenomena is not a miracle.

How else can we explain this guarantee? How can G-d provide such an assurance without a miracle? The Ibn Ezra teaches a principle in Chumash on the pasuk in the Asserres 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 one 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. 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 wants from us with 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 don't covet the Crown Jewels, I don't covet my neighbor's house. It's his house. He needs it. G-d gave it to him. I have no relationship to it.

Says the Mikdash Mordechai, that is 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 G-d. We are not the owners. However G-d chooses to distribute His property is appropriate.

If we reach that wonderful level, the Gentiles will not desire our land either, because they will look at us and recognize that we are the Chosen Nation. They will look at us and recognize that we are 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".

Personalities and Sources

Rav Ovadia Sforno -- (1470-1550); Rome and Bolgna, Italy; classic Chumash commentary. Rav Avraham Ibn Ezra -- (1089-1164); Classic Spanish commentary on all of Bible. Mikdash Mordechai -- Rav Mordechai Ilan, contemporary, Israel.

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Drasha PARSHAS KI SISAH MASKED EMOTIONS Volume 2 Issue 22

In what is probably the most anti-climactic event in Jewish history, the nation that was about to receive the Torah from Moshe turns away from the will of Hashem. After 40 days they begin to worry that Moshe will never return and they panic. They create a new leader for themselves -- The Golden Calf..

The Torah describes the scene in Exodus 32:6: "The people offered (the calf) peace offerings and they sat down to eat and drink and they got up to revel."

Hashem immediately commands Moshe to descend Mount Sinai in order to admonish his corrupt nation. As Moshe comes down the mountain he hears tumultuous shouts emanating from the people who were celebrating their new found deity. His student, Yehoshua, also hears the sounds and declares (Exodus 32:17) "the sound of battle is in the camp." Moshe listens and amends the theory. He tells Yehoshua, "It is not the sound of victory, nor the sound of defeat: I hear the sound of distress." When Moshe sees the Golden Calf he breaks the Tablets and restores order, sanity, and the belief in Hashem.

What is strange about the episode is the contrast of the sounds made and the sounds heard. If the Jewish People reveled and celebrated then why did Yehoshua hear sounds of war and how did Moshe hear sounds of distress? They should both have heard the sound of celebration and festivity.

Rav Chaim of Sanz had a custom: he would test the local children on a monthly basis. The children would recite orally from the Mishnah or Talmud and Rav Chaim would reward them generously with sweets and money. Once a group of secular Jews decided to dupe Rav Chaim. They taught a Talmudic selection to a gentile child and reviewed it with him until he knew it perfectly. They dressed him like a Chasidic child and had him stand in line with all the other children to be tested.

The rabbi listened to the young boy intently. The other children were puzzled: they did not remember this boy from their cheder, yet they were amazed at the remarkable fluency he displayed in reciting his piece. Rav Chaim was not impressed at all. He turned to the young man and said, "please tell your father that there are better ways to earn a few coins!" With that he dismissed the child.

The secularists were shocked. "How did the Rabbi know?" Their curiosity forced them to approach Rav Chaim. Rav Chaim smiled as he answered them. "There are two ways to say the Gemorah. One is filled with spirituality. The child's body is swaying and filled with the emotion of Torah. The other is just repetitive rote. This young man lacked the fire and the true joy that the Jewish children have when learning Torah. I knew he was not one of ours."

The Jews got up to revel around the golden calf. Moshe and Yehoshua however knew the difference between true joy -- simcha -- and confusion. The Jews revel were in essence distressed but it was masked with drinks and noise makers. True joy is coupled with a certainty and a sense of direction; something lacking for those Jews celebrating the idol. The Jews may have gotten up to celebrate, but it was no celebration. It may have looked like

a party to the untrained eye, but Moshe knew the true sound of joy. It did not exist with the Golden Calf. True joy is the harmony of spirituality and contentment. Superficial sounds of euphoria and celebration are heard by those with true insight as sounds of battle and distress.

May we all merit to hear the true sounds of peace joy and harmony in our time. Good Shabbos (c) 1996 Rabbi Mordchai Kamenetzky Yeshiva of South Shore 516-328-2490 Fax 516-328-2553

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"Ohr Somayach <ohr@jer1.co.il> Highlights of the Torah weekly port...

Torah Weekly - Ki Sisa * TORAH WEEKLY *
Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion
with "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemiro

Summary

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men, age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan - the women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and Hashem instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels, and Aaron and his sons. Hashem selects Betzalel and Oholiav to be the master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that Hashem made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments. The mixed multitude that left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aaron to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aaron stalls and tries to delay them. Hashem tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the orgy of idol-worship he smashes the Tablets, and destroys the golden calf. The Sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and Hashem accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the Mishkan, and Hashem's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks Hashem to show him the rules by which He conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. Hashem tells Moshe to hew new Tablets, and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke His mercy. Idol worship, intermarriage, and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the First-born, the First-fruits, Shabbos, Shavuot and Succos are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of Tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

Commentaries

Labor of Love

"And on the seventh day, a Shabbos of Shabbos." (31:15)
There are two kinds of rest. The first kind of rest is a rest from weariness, a chance to recharge your batteries, to enable yourself to continue to work. For no-one can work indefinitely. Everyone needs a break. The second kind of rest comes at the end of a project. The last brushstroke of a painting. The final sentence of a novel. The last brick in a new home. Then you take a step back and look at your work. You feel the satisfaction of completion. It's finished. It's done. A time to rest and enjoy the fruits of your labors.

"You shall labor for six days and do all your work." How can you do all your work in six days? Can you build an entire house in six days? The Torah teaches us that when Shabbos comes, even though you're only half-way through your project, you should think of it as though it was completely finished. In other words, on Shabbos, you should picture yourself as experiencing the sense of rest and satisfaction that comes after a good job well done, and not that you're just taking a break. In a sense, this is what Hashem did when the world was six days old. He looked at the Creation and saw that it was finished, the greatest building project ever, the Heavens and the earth were completed. Our rest on Shabbos is a commemoration of that rest.

This is the essential difference between our Shabbos and the secular idea of a 'day of rest'. The secular world understands the day of rest as a break so that you can return to the week revitalized and refreshed. It's only a break. Shabbos, on the other hand, is not just pushing the pause button on life. It's the creation of a feeling that everything in one's life is complete. There's nothing left to do -- except sit back and enjoy the fruits of one's labor.

(Based on Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in L'Torah UL'Moadim)

A Valid Visa

"Hew for yourself two tablets of stone." (34:1)

Once, there was a traveler who wanted to visit an exotic and remote country on the roof of the world. This country had the reputation of being almost impossible for tourists to enter. So, when our traveler was granted his tourist visa, it came to him as something of a surprise. However, in spite of this, he was convinced that he would be stopped at the border and refused entry to his destination. He had set his heart on the trip, so he enlisted the services of a 'special agent', a certain Mr. Shaker, who had contacts in high places in the government of the country. Shaker was able to magically open 'locked doors'. All of this came at a price. Quite a tidy sum was deposited in a numbered bank account. And then the word came.

All clear. He would be met at the airport by an official who would usher him through the customs and immigration formalities. He needed to bring nothing with him. Not even his visa. He would be recognized immediately and whisked through the airport in a flash.

On arrival, our traveler bounded off the plane and presented himself at the immigration desk. "Visa please!" asked a uniformed official. "I'm sorry?" said the traveler. "I said -- 'Visa Please!'" repeated the official, somewhat irritated. "But -- don't you recognize me?" "If you gave me your visa, maybe I'd be able to recognize you, said the official, sarcastically. "But, but, Mr. Shaker said..." "Look" said the official, "I've no idea who this Mr. Shaker is, but all you need to enter the country is a valid visa. However, without that, there's nothing I can do..."

With this story, perhaps we will understand why it was that the first tablets of the covenant were hewn by Hashem, whereas the second tablets were hewn by Moshe. The sin of the golden calf was not real idol worship, but was based on a mistake: that, since Hashem was the maker of the first tablets, it was impossible to fathom their depths without the assistance of lofty spiritual powers. It was for this reason that the people had fashioned the likeness of the ox to worship, for this is one of the mystical creatures that surround the heavenly throne. The people thought that mystical powers of the ox would help them to transcend the boundaries of human reach and be close to Hashem and to understand His Torah. While Moshe was still with them, they relied on Moshe to bring them close to Hashem, and did not seek other means. However, when they thought that Moshe was dead, they turned to other ways of elevating themselves.

The truth is that every Jew has his own passport to spirituality. It's called the Torah. It contains all the visas we need to reach out of this world. We need no special agents or intermediaries. With our own human abilities we can achieve the sublime.

It was for this reason that Hashem commanded Moshe to hew the second tablets: to demonstrate that human hands were involved in their making; that through our own efforts, we can earn the help of Hashem to understand all of the words of the Holy Torah and to climb to great heights. It is

for that reason that the Torah is called *Toras Moshe* -- the Torah of Moshe -- the Torah belongs to man. It is possible to gain entry to its most esoteric and remote regions via the visa of human effort.
(Based on Rabbi Moshe Feinstein)

Haftorah: Ezekiel 36:16-38 Parshas Parah

One who aspires to purify himself spiritually, is given help from Above. The period before Rosh Chodesh Nissan is especially favorable for purification. This is one of the reasons that we read Parshas Parah at this time of the year. But there is a more basic reason: In the time of the Beis Hamikdash, it was on the 14th of Nissan that the korban Pesach was brought by all the Jewish People. Parshas Parah deals with the laws of purification that were needed to purify the Jewish People from contact with a dead body -- a necessary preliminary to entering the Beis Hamikdash and bringing the korban Pesach. The Haftorah describes the time of Mashiach, when Hashem will 'sprinkle purifying waters on the Bnei Yisrael' and remove all the impurities that have encrusted their souls.

"I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh instead." (46:26)

Hashem's mitzvos are our life blood. When we neglect them, our hearts freeze over, severed from their lifeline. We become spiritually rigid. Our hearts atrophy, coarsen and eventually become as rigid as stone. And because we then have made ourselves a heart of stone, we don't realize that this is why we have so little faith. How can a heart of stone have faith? We don't realize that our complaints against the Almighty come from a rock chamber entombed in our chests. Eventually it will be too late for a 'bypass'. Hashem will come and give us a heart that is soft, that cries -- that wants to hear the word of Hashem and beat in time to its Maker.

Sing, My Soul! Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

Yom Shabbason Ain Lishkoach - "The day of rest should not be forgotten"

The dove found in it a place to rest...and there will the weary ones rest
Three different interpretations have been suggested for the symbolism of the dove in this song.

1. The dove which Noah sent from the Ark to see if the flood waters had subsided found a place to land in Gan Eden on Shabbos. In similar fashion those who are weary from studying Torah with all their might will also find their rest in Gan Eden.
2. The Shechinah -- the Divine presence -- is, as it were, homeless during the exile of Israel and finds a place to rest only on Shabbos and Yom Tov.
3. The Jewish Nation is compared to the dove. All other birds rest on a tree or a cliff when they tire but the dove merely folds one weary wing to its body and continues flying with the other. It is the restorative quality of the Shabbos which allows the Jewish dove to keep on going despite all of its wearying hardships.

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"Menachem Leibtag <ml@etzion.org.il> Chumash shiur...
Midot Ha'Rachamim / Ki'tisa

For those of you on the Parsha list who have signed up since Rosh Ha'shana, I am resending the shiur on the "13 midot of rachamim" as it also serves as a shiur on Parshat Ki'tisa.

This week's regular Parsha shiur will be sent out iy"y by Thursday evening.

THE 13 MIDOT OF RACHAMIM

[Note: It is highly suggested that you follow this shiur with a Tanach Koren handy. If possible, it is advisable to first read

Shmot chaps. 19->20, 23:20->24:14, and chaps. 32->34.]

The recitation of the "13 midot ha'rachamim" (God's thirteen attributes of mercy), the central refrain of the Slichot prayers, is often understood as a 'mystical' formula capable of invoking Divine forgiveness. This perception could be supported by Rav Yochanan's statement concerning the 'Covenant of the 13 midot' ("Brit shlosh esray") as explained in Mesechet Rosh Hashana (17b):

"va'yavor Hashem al panav va'yikra" : Rav Yochanan stated ... whenever Am Yisroel sins, they should say before Me these psukim (the '13 midot') and I (God) will forgive them. "

Could this perception be correct? Are such 'short-cut' methods for attaining forgiveness congruent with our concept of "t'shuva" (repentence)?

In the following shiur we will suggest a deeper insight into the relationship between "t'shuva" and the "13 midot" by exploring the nature of this covenant ("brit 13") within its biblical setting.

A covenant constitutes the definition of a relationship between two parties. As we will soon demonstrate, Chumash also refers to the "13 midot" as a 'brit'- the special covenant made between God and Am Yisrael when Moshe Rabeinu ascended Har Sinai to receive the 'second luchot'. This covenant served as a replacement for the original covenant made at "Ma'amad Har Sinai" (the 'first luchot'), which was broken due to the sin of the Golden Calf ("chet ha'egel"). As the purpose of this shiur is to better appreciate the meaning of "13 midot", this latter covenant must be studied in contrast to the terms of original covenant made at Har Sinai and in consideration of the events that took place at "chet ha'egel".

Our study will begin with an examination of the terms of the original covenant (the 'first luchot'), in order to compare them to the terms of the new covenant ("brit 13 midot"), the 'second luchot'.

Just as the second luchot are characterized by certain Divine attributes, so to the first luchot. Surprisingly enough, although these attributes of the first luchot are quite obvious, they are often overlooked. To find them, we must first prove that the "Aseret ha'Dibrot", given at Ma'amad Har Sinai, constitute the foundation of this covenant. To do so, we must briefly review the events that took place at Ma'amad Har Sinai.

Prior to the revelation of the "Aseret ha'Dibrot" at Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael accepted God's proposition to keep His forthcoming special covenant:

"Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep MY COVENANT ["ushmartem et briti"] and you will be a "segula" ... and you shall become for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation ["mamlchet kohanim v'goy kadosh"] ... All the people answered together saying 'All that Hashem has spoken we will do'..." (Shmot 19:5-8)

Upon accepting this proposition, Bnei Yisrael received the "Aseret ha'Dibrot" (20:1-14), followed by many additional laws as recorded in Parshat Mishpatim /20:19->23:33). Afterwards, Bnei Yisrael entered into a formal covenant - "brit na'aseh v'nishma", which included the public reading of the "sefer ha'brit" which included the "Dibrot" and the "Mishpatim". [Read 12:1-11 carefully!] Then, Moshe ascended Har Sinai to receive the 'first luchot', the symbol of this covenant, upon which Hashem inscribed the its most fundamental laws - the "Aseret ha'Dibrot" (24:12-13).

We will now survey this original covenant in search of God's "midot" (attributes), showing that it is characterized by a very intense and precise relationship between God and His people.

Our first encounter with God's attributes in the first covenant can be found within the "Aseret ha'Dibrot" themselves!:

In the second "dibur" in reference to "avodah zarah" we learn that Hashem is:

1) Anochi Hashem ... EL KANA

He is a jealous God- & therefore He will punish ...

2) POKED A'VON AVOT AL BA'ANIM - L'SONEI

He exacts punishment not only on the those who hate him (who sin) but even on their offspring!

and 3) O'SEH CHESED L'ALAFIM L'OHAVEI u'lshomrei mitzvotai

He exacts kindness (reward) for those who follow Him even up to a thousand generations.

In the third "dibur" reference to "lo tisa shem hashem lashav", we find an additional attribute:

4) ki LO Y'NA'KEH HASHEM (God will not forgive he who sins)

The above examples exhibit what is known as "midat ha'DIN", exacting punishment. These attributes of "midat ha'DIN" are not necessarily negative. Although they threaten immediate punishment for those who transgress ("l'sonei"), they also assure immediate reward for those who obey ("l'ohavei").

A further example of this intense relationship can be found at the conclusion of the mitzvot of Mishpatim, prior to the convening of the formal covenant:

"I am sending a 'malach' before you to guard you on the way and help bring you into Promised Land. Be careful of him and OBEY him, Do not defy him - FOR HE SHALL NOT PARDON YOUR SINS ("KI LO

YISAH L'PISHEICHEM"), since My Name is with him. [on the other hand...] Should you obey him and do all that I say - I WILL DEFEAT YOUR ENEMIES FOR YOU... (Shmot 23:20-22)

Once again, we find exacting punishment should Am Yisrael not follow His mitzvot and immediate reward (assistance in conquest of the Land) for obeying Him.

Subsequently, when Bnei Yisrael sinned by worshiping the Golden Calf ("chet ha'egel"), Hashem intended to enact immediate punishment, precisely according to the conditions of this covenant:

"v'ata ha'nicha li V'YICHAH API BA'HEM v'achaleim.."

["And now, let Me be, and I will kindle MY ANGER against them that I may destroy them..."] (Shmot 32:10)

The above examples, all reflecting "midat ha'Din", indicate that Hashem expected Am Yisrael to attain and maintain a very high level of behavior. [Note that this intense and close relationship between God and His people parallels the environment found in Gan Eden (see Br.2:16-17 "v'akmal").]

Let's summarize the attributes governing Divine retribution according to the terms of the 'first covenant' that we have noted thus far. They will 'set the stage' for our table which will later compare them to the '13 attributes' of the second covenant:

Despite the idyllic nature of this original covenant, the events of "chet ha'egel" proved that its expectations were too high. We will now review those events, as they led not only to the annulment of the first covenant, but also to the establishment of the new one.

According to the terms of the first covenant, the sin of "chet ha'egel" required immediate punishment (32:8). God was faced with two alternatives:

1) To destroy Am Yisrael and make a nation out of Moshe, [or people like Moshe who could realistically remain at this high level.] (Shmot 32:10)

2) To annul the original covenant ("brit Sinai").

The first alternative was thwarted by Moshe Rabeinu's petition that God not evoke His anger (32:11-13). Consequently, to second alternative was chosen, which required the annulment of "brit Sinai". [Note Moshe's decision to break the first "luchot", the symbol of that covenant (32:15-16), as well as the commandment later on demanding that Bnei Yisrael remove "their jewelry", the symbol of the high level attained at Har Sinai (see 33:5-6).]

A very strange predicament now arose. Bnei Yisrael were now left 'stranded' in the desert WITHOUT "brit Sinai". Was there any

purpose left for their existence?

Although "Brit Sinai" was now broken, the very original covenant forged between God and Avraham Avinu ("brit Avot") still remained. Moshe Rabeinu recalled this "brit" in his "tiflah":

"Remember Your servants, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, your servants to whom YOU SWORE... that their offspring will inherit the Land" . (Shmot 32:13)

Hashem now suggested the unthinkable; that Bnei Yisrael would proceed on their journey to the Promised Land to fulfill "brit Avot", yet WITHOUT "brit Har Sinai", WITHOUT THE 'SHCHINAH' in their midst! The dream of becoming a holy nation, a "mamelechet kohanim v'goy kadosh", was shattered!

"And Hashem said to Moshe - Set out from here, you and the people which you have brought out of Egypt to the Land which I swore to Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov ("brit Avot") ... but I WILL NOT GO IN YOUR MIDST for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I destroy you on the journey" (33:1-3)

Moshe Rabeinu, unwilling to accept this possibility, 'countered' with a 'sit down strike', imploring God that His presence remain with His people:

"... [and Moshe said to God] 'Unless YOUR PRESENCE WILL GO WITH US do not make us leave this place ("iym ayn pa'necha holchim al ta'aleynu m'zeh"). For how should it be known that Your people have gained Your favor unless You GO WITH US..." (33:12-16)

Moshe's refusal left Hashem, "k'vayachol" (as it were), in a most difficult predicament. Should He allow His "shchinah" to remain with the people, Bnei Yisrael would not survive His anger, for they are an "am kshe ofef" - a stiffnecked people. Should He leave them in the desert, "brit Avot" would not be fulfilled!

The resolution of this dilemma underscores the importance of the "13 midot". According to the original covenant, the Presence of the "shchinah" was interlinked with "midat ha'Din", exacting punishment. Now, a new set of Divine attributes was necessary which would allow forgiveness for the sins of Bnei Yisrael, even though the "shchinah" was to remain in their midst: "midat ha'rachamim".

"And Hashem said to Moshe, 'I will also do this thing that you request... [then Moshe asked...] 'Let me behold Your Presence'. And Hashem answered: 'I will pass all my goodness before you, and I will proclaim MY NAME (ha'va'ya) before you, and I WILL PARDON he whom I will pardon and I WILL HAVE MERCY on he to whom I give mercy (v'chanoti et asher achon, v'richamti et asher arachem)... (33:17-19)

As the original covenant made at Har Sinai had been broken, the establishment of these new attributes required a new covenant. Thus, a formal ceremony, parallel to the revelation at Ma'amad Har Sinai, was necessary. Moshe, once again, ascended the mountain (see 34:1-5 and its parallel in Shmot 19:20-24), this time with 'luchot' carved by man (see further iyun questions). The new Divine attributes, pursuant to the new covenant, were now formally proclaimed:

"And Hashem came down in a cloud ("vayered Hashem b'anan") ... and Hashem passed before him and proclaimed: ' Hashem, Hashem kel rachum v'chanun, erech apaiim v'rav chesed v'emet(the 13 midot)"... (Shmot 34:5-8)

Hashem then confirmed this covenant ("hiney anochi koret brit..." see 34:10). Afterwards, Hashem inscribed the dibrot on these 'second luchot', the symbol of this new "brit 13" covenant (see 34:29-30)!

Based on this explanation, we can now better appreciate the choice of the words used to express the thirteen "midot ha'rachamim".

The following table will compare the attributes which we found at "Ma'amad Har Sinai" in the first part of the shiur to the attributes proclaimed at the time of the 'second luchot'. [It will be followed by a more detailed explanation.]

Bracha.

One who needs to smell an item to test if it is fit for purchase does not recite a Bracha(13).

A sweet-smelling fruit, such as an Esrog, requires the Bracha of Ha'nosen Reiach Tov Ba'peiros(14). Many Poskim rule that nowadays, when fruits are generally grown for their taste and not for their smell, one should avoid smelling these fruits, since it is questionable if a Bracha is required(15). On Sukkos, the Esrog should not be smelled at all(16).

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FOOTNOTES:

- 1 OC 216:1.
- 2 OC 217:2. See also Mishna Berura 217:1 & 216:11.
- 3 Shaar Hatzion 216:46.
- 4 Mishna Berura 216:17
- 5 Ruling of Harav Y.Y. Fisher (V'zos Habracha pg. 176). See throughout the entire Yom Tov, not only at the time the Mitzvah is fulfilled.

"Mordecai Kornfeld <kornfeld@netmedia.co.il>Intriguing glimpses into the Parashat Ki-Tisa 5756 - "Hashem's hidden treasures"
The Weekly Internet P * A * R * A * S * H * A - P * A * G * E
by Mordecai Kornfeld kornfeld@jer1.co.il
This week's Parasha-Page is dedicated to the memory of Mr. Pinchas (Philip) Berger, whose Yahrzeit is 17 Adar, by his son, Mr. Avi Berger.

HASHEM'S HIDDEN TREASURES

Speak to the B'nai Yisrael, and tell them to keep the laws of My Shabbat because it is a sign between Me and you throughout the generations. I want the Jewish people to know that I am making them holy through the Shabbat. (Shemot 31:13)

Rav said, "One who plans to give a present to his friend must notify him in advance that he plans to give him a present" [in order to prepare the friend for it, so that the he won't be surprised and embarrassed when he suddenly receives a large gift -Rashi]. ...This is learned from the way Hashem gave us the Shabbat. Hashem said to Moshe, "I have a very special gift in My house of hidden treasures, and its name is 'Shabbat.' I intend to give it to the Jewish people -- go and inform them of My intentions." (Shabbat 10b)

In this week's Parasha, Hashem instructs Moshe to inform the Jewish people that He is giving them a wonderful gift -- the Shabbat. The Gemara teaches that Hashem took the Shabbat from His "house of hidden treasures" in order to give it to us. Just where is Hashem's house of hidden treasures, and what does he keep there? Let us attempt to lift some of the veils that cover this cryptic Aggadic statement. Perhaps, by paying close attention to our Sages' choice of words, we may be able to reveal some of its secrets.

II

Rebbi Elazar said: Using the light that Hashem created on the first day of Creation, one could see from one end of the world to the other. When Hashem saw, however, the way people would sin in the generation of the Great Flood and the generation of the Tower of Babel, He hid that light from them. For whom did He hide it away? For the righteous in the World to Come. (Chagigah 12a)

The light of Creation, a Divine Light, was hidden away for the righteous. It will be revealed to them in the World to Come. It would seem that the Divine Light was taken away as soon as it appeared in this world, on the first day of Creation (Bereishit 1:3). We find in Midrashic sources, however, that the mysterious Divine Light continued to play a prominent

footnote 8 for the view of Chazon Ish.

6 Mishnah Berura 217:1&2.

7 If they are picked up in order to be smelled, a Bracha is said. See footnote 8 for the view of Chazon Ish.

8 Mishnah Berura 216:16. Chazon Ish (OC 35:5-7), however, rules, that if the coffee jar is going to be returned to the kitchen, then no Bracha may be recited over it. In his view, a Bracha is recited only when the spices are specifically set aside for the purpose of their smell and have no other purpose.

9 Harav Y.Y. Fisher (V'zos Habracha pg. 175).

10 View of Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (V'zos Habracha pg. 179) & Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 61: fn. 32). Harav M. Feinstein is also quoted as ruling not to use perfume for Havdalla. (Kavod V'oneg Shabbos pg. 132).

11 Mishnah Berura 297:1. Even if fruit is used - Aruch Hashulchan 297:4.

12 Mishna Berurah 217:10 & 216:41; Aruch Hashulchan 217:5.

13 Harav C.P. Scheinberg (V'zos Habracha pg. 177).

14 This is the proper Nusach which is quoted by most Poskim and all Sidurim - unlike Mishnah Berurah 216:9.

15 See Chazon Ish, ibid, and V'zos Habracha pg. 175.

16 Mishna Berura 216:53. See Biur Halacha that this is so role at the end of creation. It was only hidden away after the first Shabbat:

When the sun set following the sixth day of Creation, Hashem wanted to hide away the Divine Light [i.e. the Divine Light should have been limited to the Garden of Eden, and when Adam and Chava were chased out of the Garden of Eden at sunset of the sixth day (Sanhedrin 38b) they should have lost the privilege of seeing the Divine Light -Maharzu]. However, in honor of the Shabbat Hashem let the light remain. [That is to say, He let the light remain in the entire world, even outside the Garden of Eden, and He didn't limit it to the Garden of Eden until after Shabbat -Maharzu]. This is what the verse means, "Hashem blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Bereishit 2:3). How did He bless it? With the Divine Light...

Rav Levi said, quoting Rav Ze'ira: For thirty-six hours Man enjoyed the Divine Light -- twelve hours before Shabbat, twelve hours on the eve of the first Shabbat, and twelve hours on the day of Shabbat. When the sun set following the first Shabbat, darkness came. (Bereishit Rabba 11:2).

Even though Man was not fit to take advantage of the Divine Light outside the Garden of Eden after his sin, nevertheless, Hashem let Man enjoy the Divine Light even outside the Garden of Eden for the duration of the Shabbat. The first Shabbat was unique in this sense. Nevertheless, the interpretation that the Midrash offers for the verse in Bereishit implies that this same light somehow graces our every Shabbat experience, albeit to a lesser extent. Apparently, there is a quality that the Divine Light imparts to Shabbat. Whatever coveted benefit the Divine Light grants the righteous in the World to Come, is granted to us in some respect by Shabbat. In this manner, the Divine Light shines once again on Shabbat. It does not shine as brightly as it did for Adam on that first Shabbat, but it's light nonetheless illuminates our Shabbat.

In fact, the Gemara teaches that Shabbat is no less than a sampling ("Me'en") of what is destined for us in the World to Come (Gemara Berachot 57b). Shabbat is referred to "as one in sixty of the World to Come" -- that is to say, a taste of what is to be in the World to Come (ibid.). Perhaps the Gemara is teaching us the same lesson as the above Midrash. Just as the light that Hashem hid away from this world will shine in the World to Come, so too that Divine Light -- or at least a certain taste of it -- shines in our Shabbat.

Perhaps this is what our Sages meant when they said that the Shabbat was one of the "hidden (heb. 'Ganuz') treasures" of Hashem. Where does Hashem "hide away" His treasures? In the Garden of Eden, where the righteous will be able to enjoy it in the World to Come. And what are these treasures? Treasures such as the hidden Divine Light (heb. "Ohr HaGanuz"), that mankind was not fit to behold. The Shabbat experience was taken from this Divine treasure house. Shabbat holds within it the key to experiencing

the Divine Light in this world.

III

Let us probe deeper. Perhaps we can gain some understanding of how this Divine Light is hidden in the Shabbat.

"Bnai Yisaschar" (HaRav Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, c.1850) tells us, quoting from Kabbalistic sources, "Where was it that Hashem hid away the Divine Light? He hid it away in the Torah!" (Bnai Yisaschar, Kislev, #1). Earlier we learned from the Midrash Bereishit Rabba that the Divine Light is confined to the Garden of Eden, at present. We now we see that we can find that light even in this world, in the Torah.

One source for this may be found in a Midrash Tanchuma (Noach, #3). The Midrash quotes the verse (Yeshayah 9:1), "Those that walked in darkness saw a tremendous light." This, explains the Midrash, is referring to those who learn the Talmud (Gemara), who see a great light. Hashem lights up their eyes with the correct knowledge of the Halacha, and He will show them the full light of the sun in the World to Come. (See Parasha-Page, Sukkot 5756, section II, about the sun of the World to Come and the sun of this world. It is interesting to note that the Gemara in Berachot [ibid.] counts the sun, too, as a sampler of the World to Come.) Through learning the Talmud, one can perceive the "tremendous light" of the World to Come. "He hid it away in the Torah."

Perhaps we can relate this Divine Light that shines from the Torah to the Divine Light of the Shabbat. The Midrash tells us that time is to be set aside on Shabbat for the study of Torah (Yalkut Shimoni #408). Shabbat is not merely a day off from work for bodily rest. Rather, we are to take advantage of our physical rest, and busy ourselves with our spiritual growth (as we discussed at length in Parasha-Page, Vayakhel 5755). Perhaps this is what it means that the Divine Light shines to a certain extent during every Shabbat. On Shabbat, the Divine Light that emanates from the Torah is given an opportunity to shine.

IV

Let us examine further the essence of this Divine Light. What benefit do we receive from this light, and in what way does it "shine" forth from both the Torah and the Shabbat?

As we have seen, the primeval Divine Light was "hidden" with Hashem's treasures. The Gemara in Berachot teaches us exactly what is that Hashem treasures:

Rebbi Chanina said: Hashem decrees everything is to happens to a person before he is born, except for whether or not he will fear Hashem. As Rav Chanina said from Rav Shimon bar Yochai: The only thing that Hashem treasures is a person's fear of Hashem.

(Berachot 33b)

Our role in this world is to teach ourselves the fear of Hashem. It is our only true goal in life. Hashem treasures whatever we can accomplish towards that goal. It is our awe and fear for Hashem, that He keeps in his house of hidden treasures! Anything that can produce this desired goal and bring us to fear Hashem, is said to be in Hashem's treasure-house as well.

This is the secret of the Divine Light that will shine for the righteous in the World to Come. The Divine Light is the clear realization of Hashem's presence in the world. This is the light with which one could see "from one end of the world to the other" -- from the purpose of Creation, to the expiration of this world and the reward of the righteous in the World to Come. Originally, Hashem made the world in a way such that it would be clear to everyone that He was its Creator and King. However, when Hashem saw that man would still sin, he hid away that light. If man sinned even when it was obvious that Hashem was king, he would bring catastrophe on all of Creation. If man sinned because there was room for

him to miss the signs of Hashem's presence, then at least then he would not be rebelling openly against his Creator. Hashem therefore hid the Divine Light from mankind until the World to Come. In the World to Come however,

the Divine Light shines in full glory. It will be clear to all, at that point, that Hashem is our Lord and Creator. (See Parasha-Page for Sukkot 5756, section III, and for Yitro 5756, section III.)

Hashem left us an opportunity to appreciate the Divine Light -- to become clearly aware of His existence -- by way of the Torah. By studying the teachings in the Torah and by acting according to its ways, we come to realize plainly that there is a Creator in this world, and that we are His creations, put on this world to do His will. This is the light that is "hidden in the Torah." Similarly, Shabbat offers us the opportunity to grow in the fear of Heaven, and to become closer to Hashem in this world. It is in this way that the Divine Light shines forth on Shabbat. On Shabbat everyone feels closer to Hashem. As the Mishnah tells us, even a person who normally can not be trusted to tell the truth is trusted about what he says on Shabbat, because on Shabbat he is afraid to lie (D'mai 4:1)! On Shabbat, he too "sees the light."

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Bircas Hatorah <bircas@jer1.co.il> " Weekly Words of Torah from Bircas
Ki Tissa

Selected, translated and arranged by Rabbi Dov Rabinowitz
" 'Only' guard (observe) my Sabbaths." (31,13)

This portion, which commands the observance of the Sabbath immediately after the instructions regarding the Mishkan (Tabernacle), is the source that the building of the Mishkan did not take precedence over the observance of the Sabbath.

The Chasam Sofer observes that our possuk hints to the 21 Sabbaths which

there were between the day after Yom Kippur (when the construction of the Mishkan began) and the twenty first of Adar, which was a Friday, (when the Mishkan was completed); for the seven days of the Miluim (inauguration of the Cohanim) began on the twenty third of Adar, which was a Sunday. This can be deduced from the gemora (Shabbos 87b) which relates that the first day of Nissan, which was the eighth day of the Miluim, was a Sunday.

Now it is clear that the construction of the Mishkan had to be completed before the Miluim began, so it was necessarily finished by Friday the twenty first of Adar.

Moshe Rabeinu descended from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur which was a Monday (Tosfos - Bava Kamma 82a), and the construction commenced on the next day. Thus the first Shabbos on which they desisted from constructing the Mishkan as the fifteenth of Tishri, and there are twenty one Shabosses from then until the twenty first of Adar, which was a Friday.

The word 'ach' - only - has a gematria (numerical value of its letters) of twenty one, hinting that they observed the Sabbath, and refrained from building the Mishkan, for twenty one Sabbaths.

"...and there fell from the nation on that day about three thousand men."
(32,28) The Midrash relates this to "and (the thief) shall pay five cattle for a
(stolen) bull." (21,37)

The Gaon of Vilna (Divrei Eliyahu quoting the Sa'aras Eliyahu) explains the

connection in terms of the Midrash on the possuk (Kohelles 7,28) "One man out of a thousand I have found, and a woman in all these I have not found." The Midrash expounds: "One man out of a thousand" - this refers to the sin of the (golden) calf, where one man out of a thousand transgressed, "and a woman in all 'these' I have not found" refers to the fact that no woman sinned in the incident of the calf, which is hinted by the use of the word 'these', which was also used with regard to the golden calf: 'these' are your gods (32,4) (The Hebrew is in the plural form here, although it refers to the golden calf DR).

Now HaShem always operates according to the principle of "measure for measure" (midda k'neged midda). In the light of this, we have to understand the punishment. When one in a thousand sinned, which means only six hundred

out of a total of six hundred thousand, why did three thousand fall?

The Midrash answers this with the law of repayment of five for one for a stolen bull. This hints in Kabbalistic terms to the "blemish" which the sin of the golden calf caused to the Bull in the Merkovah ("chariot" of HaShem). This is related to the repayment five times over, for stealing a bull, so here too the punishment was five times the six hundred who transgressed, leading to a total of three thousand.

(This explains the number of men punished; however, from a different viewpoint, every man who was punished deserved it in a specific way. HaShem

can calculate how to administer justice so that numerous criteria are simultaneously fulfilled. This explanation refers to only one criterion. DR)

kollel@mcs.com" haftorah@torah.org Parshas Ki Sisa / Parah
MESSAGE FROM THE HAFTORAH PARSHAS KI SISA / PARSHAS
PARAH YECHEZKEL 36:16

This week's Haftorah, read in conjunction with Parshas Parah, describes the

Jewish people's ultimate state of purity. The prophet Yechezkel says in the name of Hashem, "And I will sprinkle upon you pure waters which will purify

you; from all your impurities and repulsiveness I shall purify you." The prophet is referring to our final stages of purification wherein we will be completely cleansed from all sin. He likens this experience to that of one who is purified from ritual uncleanness. However, it is worthwhile to note the specific process which is chosen. Instead of comparing our purification to the traditional immersion process the prophet compares our final stages to the sprinkling of the holy waters. This elaborate and specific procedure was reserved for one who came in contact with a corpse. This contact produced a severe state of ritual uncleanness which required a unique purification procedure. This symbolism suggests a corollary between our association with sin and our association with death. Our ultimate state of purity will apparently be likened to the removal of the ritual effects of death.

In order to properly understand this relationship let us examine for a moment the nature of this unique purification process. In the special Torah reading for Parshas Parah, we learn about the sacrificial service of the red heifer. Its complex conditions and regulations indicate the uniqueness of this sacrifice. After slaughtering the heifer and sprinkling its blood outside the Bais Hamikdash, the heifer was completely burned. Its ashes were then mixed with spring water and a ritual mixture was produced. This mixture which was then sprinkled on the person who came in contact with the

corpse ritually cleansed him from his impurity. Our Chazal (Sages; see Rashi Bamidbar 19:2 II) comment on the unusual nature of this sacrifice and explain that it served as an atonement for the Jewish nation's sin of the golden calf. They reveal that the effects of that sin are ongoing and a constant atonement is necessary. It stands to reason from this that the ritual impurity of death is interrelated with the spiritual impurity caused by the sin of the golden calf. For as we see, before one can be purified from contact with death he must undergo spiritual atonement for the sin of the golden calf. The spiritual impact of that sin is apparently so powerful that it produces an ongoing effect on the ritual purity status of every Jew.

This intriguing phenomenon can be understood through the profound insights of Chazal in Mesichta Avoda Zara (5a). The Talmud teaches us that the Jewish people once transcended the curse of mortality and qualified to be eternal physical beings. Their display of readiness to accept and follow the will of Hashem was so sincere and intense that they actually transformed their physical bodies into semi spiritual entities. Even their bodies cooperated with their spiritual drives and contributed to their perfect service of Hashem. However, the Talmud informs us that this experience was unfortunately short-lived. After forty days of spirituality the Jews succumbed to fear and anxiety. They responded to the devastating notion that their leader Moshe Rabbeinu could have permanently departed from them and they desperately sought some new approach to life. This panic resulted in the shameful sin of the golden calf. In retrospect it was that serious plunge which returned the curse of mortality to the Jewish people. From that point and onward the body returned to its total physical entity, bearing the shame of sin. It possessed, once again all of the earthly urges and cravings which lure one away from fulfilling the will of Hashem.

We now return to the ritual ashes and the sacrifice of the red heifer. The Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzva 263) explains the origin of the ritual uncleanness of death. When one passes away, the soul leaves and the body remains a total physical entity. Now, barren of any association with spirituality the body projects a complete image of vanity. It represents earthly urges and desires and is associated with all the sinful practices of its lifetime. This identity and association stems back to the shameful plunge of the golden calf. It was then that the Jewish body reverted back to its present physical state, introducing ritual impurity after death. Atonement from this sin became a prerequisite for ritual purity. One must first recognize the severe repercussions of straying from Hashem, seeking alternate approaches to life. Only after detaching himself from this deep-rooted urge can he qualify to be cleansed from the ritual impurity caused by such association. The waters of the red heifer can now detach him from the impurities of the physical body and restore him to the proper appreciation for his true entity, body and soul.

We have now discovered the direct corollary between the purification from the effects of death and our ultimate state of purity. The prophet describes our ultimate purity in the following words. "And I shall give you a new heart and I will place a new spirit in your midst and I'll remove the stone heart from your flesh." Ramchal in Daas Tvunos (3:40) explains that these words refer to the lifting of the curse of mortality. The level of spirituality will be so uplifting that the body will be elevated to a semi state of spirituality. Even our physical urges and cravings will be directed to Hashem and no trace of sin will remain. The ritual waters which originally detached us from our association with death and the urges of sin will ultimately remove the entire curse of death from amongst us. Our acceptance of the will of Hashem will be so sincere and intense that even our physical bodies will only crave to serve Hashem. May we merit to witness

this very soon.

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"Menachem Leibtag <ml@etzion.org.il>" " " Chumash shiur

PARSHAT HASHAVUA
PARSHAT KI-TISA
by Menachem Leibtag

In memory of yaffa bat natan hachohen. In memory of my beloved father
shlomo zalman ben yehuda, on his first yearzeit. - annie levy

Every student of Chumash finds difficulty understanding Bnei Yisrael's sin with the Golden Calf ("Chet ha'Egel"). If the "egel" was genuine idol worship, how could a nation that witnessed so many miracles during the Exodus believe that a 'forged piece of gold' was the god that took them out of Egypt? If, on the other hand, the "egel" was only misguided attempt to represent God who took them out of Egypt (Rav Yehuda HaLevi's approach in Sefer ha'Kuzari I.77), why was He so angered?

This week's shiur resolves this difficulty by discerning two distinct stages in the events that take place at "Chet ha'egel". It will also offer a comprehensive explanation of those events based on the themes developed thus far in our study of Sefer Shmot.

INTRODUCTION

The key to our approach is recognizing the connection between "Chet ha'Egel" and the narrative at the end of Parshat Mishpatim. That narrative (ending with chapter 24), both thematically and chronologically continues directly into the story of "Chet ha'Egel" (beginning with chapter 32). The interim chapters (25->31) record the commandment to build the Mishkan. [See previous shiur on Parshat Trumah.] To understand the people's behavior during Chet ha'Egel, as well as the actions of Aharon and Moshe, one must read the narrative continuously, from chapter 24 directly to chapter 32!

By doing so:

- * The story of Moshe's ascent to receive the "luchot" on Har Sinai (24:12-18) will help us understand the people's request.
 - * The covenantal ceremony that took place at Ma'amad Har Sinai (24:1-11) will provide the basis for understanding Aharon's response.
 - * The terms of covenant between God and Bnei Yisrael made at Har Sinai (23:20-25, 19:4-6 and 20:1-3) will help us understand both God's anger and Moshe's intercession.
- [Before continuing, a careful reading of 23:20-23, 24:1-18, and 31:18-32:14 is recommended.]

We begin our analysis with a review of the events that take place at the conclusion of Ma'amad Har Sinai, as recorded at the end of Parshat Mishpatim.

FOR HOW LONG WAS MOSHE TO BE AWAY?

After Bnei Yisrael receive the Ten Commandments and the laws of Parshat Mishpatim (24:3-4), Moshe ascends Har Sinai to receive the "luchot", the Torah, and "mitzvah" (24:12). How long is it supposed to be until Moshe returns to the camp?

Despite the popular understanding that the people are aware

that Moshe will be gone for forty days, and that their sin is due to a 'one-day' lack of patience (see Rashi 32:1), we will advance an alternate approach, based on the "pshat" - the simple reading of the text.

Let's examine the psukim carefully, reading continuously from Parshat Mishpatim directly to Parshat Ki-tisa:

"... and Moshe ascended God's Mountain. To the elders he said: 'WAIT HERE for us, UNTIL WE RETURN to you.'" (24:13-14)

Moshe is leaving 'until he returns'. It is not clear precisely how long he will be gone. However, based on earlier precedents, Moshe had never ascended Har Sinai for more than one day at a time. How long could it possibly take to receive the "Luchot, Torah, & Mitzva": a few days, a few weeks?

At end of this narrative, Chumash tells US, the READER (not Bnei Yisrael), that Moshe remained on the mountain for forty days (24:18). However, the people expect Moshe to return within a few days time, at most!

A LOGICAL CONCLUSION

Now, we must consider the realities of the situation:

Recall the people's last sight of Moshe:

"And Moshe ascended the Mountain, the cloud covered the mountain. "K'vod Hashem" dwelled on Har Sinai...

Now, "k'vod Hashem" appeared IN THE SIGHT OF BNEI YISRAEL as a CONSUMING FIRE on top of the mountain, and Moshe went inside that cloud..." (24:17-19)

Days pass; weeks pass; yet Moshe does not return. The people conclude the obvious: Moshe Rabeinu is no longer among the living, he has most probably been consumed by the intense fire! [Note the Midrash (Rashi 32:1) which explains that the 'satan' showed the people Moshe's coffin.]

Who should the people turn to? Moshe had actually left instructions!

"To the elders he said... behold Aharon and Chur are with you, anyone with a problem should approach them." (24:14)

And this is exactly what we see happens when the narrative continues in Parshat Ki-tisa:

"When the people saw that Moshe was SO LONG in coming down from the mountain, the people gathered on AHARON..." (32:1)

A LOGICAL REQUEST

The people approach Aharon with a very logical request:

"Come make us a 'leader' (elokim) that will go before us...

[towards the Promised Land] BECAUSE Moshe, who took us out of the land of Egypt - we do not know what has happened to him" (32:1)

[Note that the word 'elokim' in Parshat Mishpatim refers several times to a 'human' leader, and not necessarily to a god. See 22:7,8,27. Note also 4:16 & 7:1!]

The people do not want a new god, they simply want a new leader! They need someone to guide them and continue their journey to Eretz Canaan - to fulfill God's promise to them. After all, was this not the purpose of Yetziat Mitzraim - to inherit the Promised Land (see 3:8,17 6:8)?

Furthermore, God had already promised Bnei Yisrael, in Parshat Mishpatim, that he would send a "malach" to lead them:

"Behold, I am sending a "malach" before you to guard you and bring you to the place that I have made ready..." (23:20)

[Note the Hebrew phrase "sho'lei'ach malach L'FANECHA]

The precise nature of this "malach", human or angel, is not

clear. However from psukim that describe him (23:21-24), Bnei Yisrael could have easily assumed that this "malach" was Moshe. Now that Moshe is assumed gone, the people demand new leadership that will CONTINUE the journey Moshe began.

[A textual parallel provides support for this interpretation. Note the use of "yal'chu l'fa'neinu" in Misphatim (23:20 and 20:23) compared to its use in Ki-tisa:

"kum asey lanu elokim asher yal'chu L'FA'NEINU" (32:1)]
THE 'EGEL' - AN IDOL OR A SYMBOL

Aharon is faced with a dilemma. It appears that he can no longer stall the people [see Further Iyun]; on the other hand, he must wait for Moshe's return. Since he himself can not replace Moshe, nor can he appoint anyone else as the new leader, Aharon decides to create a physical representation of God. He collects gold and forms an "egel" which was to REPRESENT--but not to REPLACE--the God who took them out of Egypt and will lead them to Eretz Canaan. [Read 32:2-4 carefully; translate according to the above explanation!]

To emphasize this function of the "egel" as a representation of the God that took them out of Egypt, Aharon proposes a ceremony, similar to the ceremony that took place at Har Sinai:

"And Aharon saw, and he built a "MIZBAYACH" in front of it, and Aharon called out and said: A celebration for GOD [note: b'shem Havaya] tomorrow. And they WOKE UP EARLY in the morning, they offered "OLOT U'SHLAMIM"..." (32:5-6)

Note the similarities to the ceremony at Har Sinai:

"...and they WOKE UP EARLY in the morning, and they BUILT A "MIZBAYACH" at the foot of the mountain and twelve monuments for the twelve tribes of Israel... and they offered OLOT and sacrificed SHLAMIM" (24:4-5)

This ceremony intentionally mirrors the ceremony that took place forty days earlier at Ma'amad Har Sinai.

Both ceremonies take place early in the morning at the foot of Har Sinai. Each revolve around a Mizbayach, on which the people offered korbanot, Olot u-Shlamim, followed by festivities that included eating and drinking (24:11, 32:6).

On both occasions, a symbol of God's presence is erected in front of the Mizbayach. In Parshat Mishpatim, the symbol is the twelve monuments (possibly representing God's revelation to the entire nation the His fulfillment of Brit Avot). In Parshat Ki Tisa, Aharon uses the "egel ha'zahav" to represent God (possibly representing the level at which God appeared to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai).

This interpretation may explain the meaning of "egel MASECHA" (32:4). A "masecha" indicates a 'face covering', hiding the true face, while leaving a representation of what man can perceive.

[A similar structure is found in the Mishkan: There, "olot u'shlamim" are offered on the Mizbayach situated in front of the Mishkan, or, more specifically, the Aron - the symbol of the Divine presence, representing the "hitgalut" at Matan Torah.]
WHY 'DAVKA' AN 'EGEL'?

Now we must explain why Aharon chose specifically an "egel" to represent God?

At Bnei Yisrael's earlier encounter with God at Har Sinai (24:1-11), Aharon, Nadav, Avihu, and the seventy elders (representing the entire nation) perceived God from the perspective of "tachat raglav" - lit. 'under His feet':

"va'yiru et Elokei Yisrael, v'tachat RAGLAV k'ma'aseh livnat

ha-Sapir..." (24:10)

Obviously, God does not have 'feet'! However, this description represents a certain spiritual level. For example, Moshe achieved the highest level, described as "panim b'fanim" (face to face). One could suggest that in contrast, "tachat rag'lav", seeing God's feet, reflects a lower spiritual level, most probably reflecting the people's insistence on a more distanced relationship in which Moshe served as their intermediary (see 20:15-18 and Dvarim 5:20-26).

Although it is very difficult to describe God in such physical terms, we find a very similar description of His presence in Sefer Yechezkel that establishes a connection between the level of "raglav" and the vision of an "egel". In the opening chapter, one aspect of the Divine Presence which is described as "REGEL" is perceived by Yechezkel as an "EGEL"!:

"v-RAG'LEIHEM REGEL y'shara, v'chaf rag'leihem k'chaf REGEL EGEL, v'notz'tzim k'ein n'choshet kalal." (Yechezkel 1:7)
[Note also the textual parallel of "even sapir"/ Yechezkel 1:26 & Shmot 24:10. See Chizkuni on Shmot 32:4.]

SO WHAT WAS SO TERRIBLE?

Our explanation thus far has been 'too good'. Both the intentions of Bnei Yisrael and Aharon appear to have been sincere. Why then does God become so angered, to the point of wanting to destroy the entire nation?

Furthermore, God is not angered on the day when the "egel" was actually forged; only on the NEXT day, after the people are 'eating and drinking'. Why doesn't God inform Moshe about the "egel" immediately when it is made, before the situation gets 'out of hand'?

To answer these questions, we must once again turn to the parallel in Parshat Mishpatim.

Despite the many parallels between the ceremony at Har Sinai with the celebration at Chet ha'Egel, we find one very important difference in the very last phrase of each narrative:

* At Har Sinai (Parshat Mishpatim):

"...they beheld God and they ate and drank." (24:11)

* At Chet ha'Egel (Parshat Ki-tisa):

"and they sat down to eat and drink, and they rose to dance" [..."VA'YAKUMU L'TZACHEK"] (32:6).

A CONTRASTING PARALLEL

This difference creates a structure known as a 'contrasting parallel'. In order to highlight the difference between two events, the Torah employs this structure, which, by displaying similarities, accentuates key differences.

There is a dispute among the commentators as to the precise translation of "l'tzachek." The possibilities include all of the 'big three': licentiousness, idolatry, and murder (see Rashi 32:7 and Breishit 21:9). In any case, Chazal understood this phrase to imply more than just 'dancing'. They interpret "l'tzachek" as the primary sin BECAUSE of its context in this contrasting parallel.

It appears that the eating and drinking at the conclusion of this ceremony seems to have led to a 'wild party'. [Someone switched the cassette!] Obviously, Aharon did not expect such frivolous behavior to ensue. Nevertheless, the situation got 'out of hand'. Impulsively, the people reverted to their old ways, to their Egyptian culture. [See Yechezkel 20:5-9 and our earlier shiurim in Sefer Shmot.]

Likewise, it was for this very reason of the 'wild dancing', that Moshe broke the luchot:

"and he saw the egel and the DANCING circles and became enraged" [va'yar et ha'egel u'M'CHOLOT...] (32:19)
[The noisy party got so loud that Yehoshua concluded that "a war was going on" (32:17)! Note Targum Unklus to "l'tzachek" 32:6 and "kol anot" 32:18.]

God is more than angry: He is utterly disappointed. Despite the numerous miracles which He had performed for Bnei Yisrael, their innate character had not changed. Because of this perverse behavior at Chet ha'Egel, God concludes that His nation is unable to change its ways, and thus, they will never be capable of becoming His special nation. The purpose of the entire process of Yetziat Mitzraim was for Bnei Yisrael to 'shake off' their decadent Egyptian culture and to develop a higher spiritual character instead. [See shiurim on Shmot thru B'shalach.] Now, it seems as though all of His efforts since Yetziat Mitzraim were in vain.

Based on this interpretation, we can now explain the psukim that describe God's reaction and Moshe's intercession.

We have explained that there were two stages in the people's sin:

- (1) making a physical representation of God;
 - (2) frivolous behavior at the conclusion of the ceremony.
- The first was understandable; the second, inexcusable.

These two stages are reflected in God's 'double statement' as He informs Moshe of what had happened (32:7-10). Note, that "va'yomer Hashem el Moshe" is repeated TWICE, even though God makes one continuous statement:

(1) - 32:7-8

"And GOD SPOKE TO MOSHE: Hurry down, for your people have acted basely ["ki shi'chet amcha"]... they have turned astray from the way that I commanded them [see 20:20!] - they made an "egel masecha" [a representation of Me]...

(2) - 32:9-10

"And GOD SPOKE TO MOSHE: I see this nation, behold it is an "am k'sheh oref" [a STIFF NECKED PEOPLE]. Now, allow Me, and I will kindle My anger against them and I will destroy them and I will MAKE YOU a great nation [instead]."

God's first statement describes the act that began with good intentions but that was nonetheless forbidden [see Shmot 20:20 - "lo ta'asun iti e-lohei kesef..."]. Although this sin requires rebuke and forgiveness (see 32:30), it was not severe enough to warrant the destruction of the entire Nation.

[Note the use of the word "shi'chet" in 32:7. In Dvarim 4:16 we find a similar use of this shoshon in relation to making a physical representation of God with GOOD intentions!]

God's second statement is in reaction to "va-yakumu l'tzachek", i.e. their frivolous behavior. Because of this regression to Egyptian culture, God concludes that they are indeed a 'stiff-necked people'; unable to change their ways. He decides, therefore, to destroy Bnei Yisrael, choosing Moshe and his offspring to become His nation instead.

These two stages of Bnei Yisrael's sin are also reflected in the two days of the people's punishment (32:27-32). On the first day, the three thousand 'instigators' who incited the licentious behavior (stage 2) are killed. For that group there is no room for forgiveness. That rebellious element must be eliminated immediately (32:26-29). On the second day, Moshe's approaches God

to beg forgiveness for those who were simply misled (stage 1).
MOSHE'S INTERCESSION

Moshe serves as a devoted advocate for Bnei Yisrael. Not only does he demand that God forgive their sin, he leaves God no alternative!

Moshe, aware that God still desires that a nation will represent Him (see 32:13), refuses God's proposal that he become that special nation (32:32). Because of Moshe's refusal, as well as in response to his various prayers (32:11-13), God concedes that Bnei Yisrael will not be destroyed (32:14); they can even continue their journey to the Promised Land (32:34). However, an appropriate punishment - the removal of the "shchina" (the Divine presence) - is necessary. This punishment, alluded to in 32:34, and detailed in 33:1-11, is actually the CONSEQUENCE of their actions.

We now suggest an explanation of those psukim, based on our understanding of God's covenant with the Avot in Sefer Breishit and Ma'amad Har Sinai:

TWO LEVELS

Recall from our shiurim on Sefer Breishit that "brit Avot" (God's covenant with the forefathers) focused primarily on the concept of Am Yisrael becoming God's special nation in Eretz Canaan, but did not mention Matan Torah. When Bnei Yisrael arrived at Har Sinai, God offered them an 'additional' covenant - to become a "mamlechet kohanim v'goy kadosh" (a priestly nation/ see 19:4-6). The details of that covenant, "brit Har Sinai", as defined in the Dibrot (20:5-6) and in Parshat Mishpatim (23:20-24), include strict and immediate punishment for the slightest transgression of God's laws. They also promise reward for adherence to His laws. [For a more complete explanation, see shiur on the 13 midot, sent out yesterday.]

Due to the events that take place at Chet ha'Egel, God realizes that Bnei Yisrael are a 'stiff-necked people', and thus cannot remain on this high level. After all, a nation that could be led astray so easily is clearly unworthy to have the "shchina" in its midst. Based on the terms of the covenant at Har Sinai, they deserve immediate punishment.

[Considering that the luchot, which Moshe receives on Har Sinai (24:12), serve as a symbol of "brit Sinai", one could suggest that Moshe's breaking of the luchot annuls that covenant, thus thwarting the impending punishment. Nonetheless, although Brit Sinai had been 'broken', Brit Avot still remained.]

Moshe stalls Bnei Yisrael's immediate punishment by arguing that even though they deserve punishment, their total destruction would cause a "chilul Hashem" (a desecration of His name) and constitute a breach of "brit Avot" (32:11-13).

Bnei Yisrael cannot remain on the high level of "brit Sinai", because they are an "am kshe oref". On the other hand, God cannot destroy them, for that would violate "brit Avot". Therefore, God is left with one alternative. Bnei Yisrael can continue their journey to the Promised Land, to fulfill "brit Avot", but only at a much LOWER spiritual level:

"Go now, LEAD the people to where I told you [the Promised Land], behold My 'MALACH' will go before you, and on the day of reckoning, I will judge you for your sins." (32:34)

[Note how 33:1-3 expounds upon this pasuk.]

Here we find that instead of 'immediate punishment', judgement will come only at 'appointed times' (u'vyom pokdi...). [See Ibn Ezra on this pasuk. He explains that this refers to each

year on Rosh Ha'shana! Note, that on Rosh Ha'shana ALL nations are judged. The status of Bnei Yisrael has fallen.]

In addition to this concept of 'delayed punishment', God also informs Moshe that He is sending a 'malach' to lead them. What is the nature of this "malach"?

Comparing the Torah's description of this 'malach' (33:1-3) to the 'malach' described at "brit Sinai" (23:20-21) provides additional proof that Bnei Yisrael have indeed fallen to a much lower spiritual level. Note the description in Parshat Mishpatim of the "malach" of "brit Sinai":

"Behold I am sending a 'malach' before you... Heed and obey him, do not defy him for he will NOT PARDON YOUR SINS, because: "Shmi b'kirbo" /My Name is in his midst" (23:20-21)

In contrast, the new 'malach', sent after Chet ha'Egel, does NOT carry God's Name in his midst:

"And God told Moshe: Set out from here... to the land which I swore to Avraham..."I'zaracha et'neva" [i.e. brit Avot].

And I will send a 'MALACH' before you... for I WILL NOT GO IN YOUR MIDST - BECAUSE you are a STIFF-NECKED people, lest I destroy you on the way." (33:1-3)

The new 'malach' represents this lower spiritual level, i.e. no Shchina. Because Bnei Yisrael are an "am kshe oref", God can no longer dwell in their midst.

To symbolize this lower level, God commands Bnei Yisrael to take off their 'jewelry' which they received at Har Sinai. Note how this otherwise difficult pasuk, makes perfect sense according to our explanation:

"And God told Moshe: Tell Bnei Yisrael - you are an AM KSHE OREF, [and should you not take off your jewelry] if for one moment I WOULD BE IN YOUR MIDST, I would destroy you! [Therefore] now TAKE OFF YOUR jewelry... So, Bnei Yisrael stripped off their jewelry which they RECEIVED AT HAR CHOREV [i.e. at Matan Torah / see Rashi!] (33:5-6)

Now, only Moshe remains at the high spiritual level of Ma'amad Har Sinai. Therefore his tent is moved OUTSIDE the camp (33:7-11), for the "shchina" can no longer dwell with the people within the camp. [Note how "m'chutza la'machaneh" is emphasized several times in 33:7.]

MOSHE'S 'SIT DOWN' STRIKE

Had Moshe accepted this new 'arrangement', Bnei Yisrael would have proceeded to inherit the Promised Land without the "shchina" in their midst. Brit Avot would have been fulfilled, but NOT Brit Sinai. However, Moshe Rabeinu is not willing to accept this situation. He intervenes, and demands:

"Unless YOU LEAD us, DO NOT MAKE US LEAVE this place... for how will be known that I AND YOUR PEOPLE have gained Your favor, only if You go with US, in order that I AND YOUR PEOPLE become distinguished from all the other nations on the face of the earth." (33:15-16)

Moshe insists that the shchina remain within the ENTIRE nation, not only with him. Only in this manner can the ultimate purpose of Am Yisrael be fulfilled.

God now faces an 'impossible' situation. The Shchina can not dwell WITH Bnei Yisrael, for they have proven themselves as an "am k'sheh oref." On the other hand, Moshe is not willing to lead Bnei Yisrael WITHOUT the Shchina. However, they cannot remain in the desert forever, for "brit Avot" must be fulfilled.

To solve this problem, God must 'change' His attributes. A new 'set of rules', know as "midot ha'rachamim" (the attributes

of Divine mercy), becomes necessary. They allow the Shchina to remain EVEN THOUGH Bnei Yisrael may sin (see 34:9), for they allow for pardon of impending punishment:

"for I will pardon he whom I will pardon, and have mercy on whom that I have mercy." (33:19, see also 34:6)

THE SECOND LUCHOT

These new attributes are enacted by a new covenant, convened in a manner similar to the original "brit Sinai" (34:1-6 / compare with 19:12-20). The 'second luchot', which Moshe receives when he ascends Har Sinai for the final forty days, become the symbol of this new covenant.

[The details of this new covenant, and its comparison to the original covenant at Har Sinai are explained in the shiur on the 13 Midot which was sent out yesterday].

After the Mishkan is constructed, Bnei Yisrael are to continue their journey to the Promised Land, WITH the Shchina in their midst: ["v-asu li Mikdash v-shachanti b-TOCHUM." (25:8)]

Iy"h, next week's shiur will discuss how the Mishkan, its structure and its laws, represents this 'compromise' spiritual level which Bnei Yisrael achieve.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. The concept of a 'malach' leading Bnei Yisrael can be represented by a physical symbol is found in Sefer Bamidbar. The Aron, the symbol of Hashem's 'Hitgalut' at Har Sinai, travels in front of the camp on their journey:

"v-Aron brit Hashem no'sey'ah l-fneihem derech shloshet yamim la-tur la-hem menucha." (Bamidbar 10:33)

1. See Bamidbar 10:35-36 Yehoshua 6:6-11.

Relate these psukim to this concept.

B. It is not clear why Aharon does not insist that the people be patient and wait for Moshe. Note that according to 24:14, the people are instructed to turn to Aharon AND Chur, should a problem arise. Interestingly enough, Chur is never mentioned again in the Chumash.

1. Relate this to the Midrash that explains Aharon's behavior because Chur had told them to wait and was killed.

C. Note the similarity between the mitzvot given when Moshe receives the second luchot (34:12-26) and certain mitzvot in Parshat Mishpatim (note especially 23:10-33).

1. Relate this to the previous shiur on Parshat Mishpatim, relating to the mitzvot "bein adam l-Makom/ l'chaveiro".

2. Explain which mitzvot need to be repeated (with minor alterations--see 34:11-26 and compare 23:12-33), considering which aspect of the original brit at Sinai was broken.

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Parshas Ki Sisa

It would take many pages to properly do justice to the topic of the Sin of the Golden Calf which is contained in this week's parsha. Although that is impossible in such a forum as this, I would still like to touch on this topic, and provide food for thought, and perhaps a deeper understanding of this grievous sin and its repercussions.

To begin with, a brief synopsis. The Jewish Nation received the Torah on Mount Sinai on the morning of the sixth of the month of Sivan.

Thirty nine days later, on the seventeenth of the month of Tamuz, after this incredible and earth-shaking experience, The Jews were worshipping the golden calf. G-d, Who had been teaching Moshe the Torah on Mount Sinai, tells him that he must go down from the mountain for "his" people have become corrupt. They are worshipping graven images. Moshe pleads with G-d

not to destroy the nation, and goes down to the camp. Upon seeing the idol and the goings on, he casts down the tablets of the ten commandments, and smashes them to pieces. He then destroys the idol and punishes the perpetrators. The next morning, after admonishing the people, Moshe makes his way back up Mount Sinai to try to achieve forgiveness on behalf of the Jewish people. Approximately eighty days later, Moshe does just that, and a new agreement is made with G-d, and two new tablets are given.

The sages of the Talmud liken this sin to a bride who commits adultery while still under the wedding canopy. As they say, "Disgraced is the bride who acts immorally (even while) inside her wedding canopy." It is in these extreme terms that they criticize that generation. The paradox is that immediately after in the next breath they write "The Rabbis taught: those who bear insult, and don't insult in kind, who listen to their disgrace, and don't answer back, about them the verse states (Judges 5) and those who love Him (G-d) are like the rising of the sun in its strength."

These words are also referring to the generation who "committed adultery while still under her wedding canopy." However, in this statement the generation is praised in the highest terms, and called those who love G-d! It seems to imply that they had an answer had they chosen to speak up. Furthermore, this generation is praised for its level of fear of G-d (Deuteronomy 5). The sages state that no generation would have been able to receive the Torah besides this one.

To reconcile these apparent contradictions, the sages make an incredible statement. "This act was not befitting such a great generation, the only reason they made the golden calf was to give an opening for those who sin to repent." This means to say that they were put in that dangerous situation to teach the subsequent generations that no matter how bad they might be, they can change for the better, even an entire generation, and be viewed by G-d with extreme favor.

Was it all worth it? A resounding YES! This is why. We live in such a world of grey areas. We are constantly forced to make decisions. We all make our share of regrettable decisions. We all experience guilt. Let me quote Rabbi Avraham J. Twersky from his book Let Us Make Man. "Guilt is an

important sensation which can function or malfunction. When functioning properly guilt is constructive...Healthy guilt, like physical pain, is a warning signal that there is a threat of something dangerous happening to the person, or that something has already happened, and needs correction. Guilt is to improper behavior what pain is to physical injury...Similarly, guilt is a distressful feeling which deters people from violating their values, or serves as an indicator that one has transgressed a value and needs to do something to bring the system back to proper functioning."

What the Torah teaches us regarding transgression is that we can do something to bring the system back to proper functioning. The generation that sinned with the golden calf was able to set things straight. Even though they fell from the most elevated plain, they returned to their exalted spiritual state through soul searching, understanding what brought them to their low state of behavior, and a sincere desire to correct it. This is relevant and valuable to all of us. Anyone who wishes sincerely to do so can reach the highest of heights no matter how far he/she has fallen. We should never give up on living up to the highest standards.

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