

BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON KI SISA - 5763

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent: February 19, 2003 To: yhe-sichot@etzion.org.il Subject: SICHOT63 -21: Parashat Ki Tisa
GUEST SICHA BY RAV YA'AKOV MEDAN
Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash Project (Vbm) Student Summaries Of Sichot Given By The Roshei Yeshiva

We ask that you say tehillim for our Shana Bet British talmid Shaltiel Moshe Ben Penina (Katsch), critically hurt in a car accident early Sunday morning.

This shiur is dedicated to the soldiers who lost their lives Shabbat morning: Noam Bahagon, 20, of Elkana Sgt. Alexei Belitsky, 21, of Rishon Letzion Sgt. Doron Cohen, 21, also of Rishon Letzion, and Sgt. Itai Mizrahi, 20, of Beer Sheva. HaMakom yenachem etkhem be-tokh she'ar Tzion ve-Yerushalayim.

PARASHAT KI-TISA

"You Will See My Back; But My Face Must Not Be Seen"

GUEST SICHA BY RAV YA'AKOV MEDAN

Summarized by Matan Glidai Translated by David Silverberg

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

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

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

What is the meaning and significance of this distinction?

In describing these two prophetic visions, Chazal employ the image of tefillin. They liken the prophetic vision of "face to face" to the viewing of the tefillin proper, while the view "from the back" they compare to the sight of the knot of the tefillin (worn on the back of one's neck). However, we may gain a clearer understanding through a comparison to the "tzitz" - head plate - worn by the Kohen Gadol. When viewing the High Priest from the front, one sees a golden strip with the inscription, "Kodesh La-Hashem" ("Sacred to God"). A rear view reveals the string of "tekhelet" (bluish dye) that held the "tzitz" around the Kohen Gadol's forehead. The Gemara (Menachot 43b) explains the significance of "tekhelet." This shade of blue resembles the color of the ocean, which itself brings to mind the color of the sky, which is similar to Heavenly Throne. Thus, one who looks straight at the Kohen Gadol beholds the Divine Name, whereas one looking from behind must employ his imagination and behold the Almighty only through the process indirect association. Similarly, herein lies the distinction between Benei Yisrael's situation before the Golden Calf and after. The nation had earned a direct revelation of the Shekhina in its most natural form, which required no exertion on their part. After the sin, they merited the revelation only through hard work and concentrated effort. The Midrash (Shir Hashirim Rabba 1:12) recounts that Benei Yisrael slept on the morning of Matan Torah, and the Almighty had to wake them. (In commemoration, we have the custom of remaining awake all night long on Shavuot engaged in Torah study.) This passage in the Midrash underscores the passivity that marked Am Yisrael's experience at Mount Sinai; they slept and G-d reached out to them. After the sin, however, we must search for God: "And I will return to My abode - until they realize their guilt. In their distress, they will seek Me and beg for My favor" (Hoshea 5:15). The depiction in Shir Ha-shirim of the maiden searching out her beloved who hides accurately depicts this concept. Nowadays, we stay awake all night long on Shavuot, rather than sleeping and waiting for the Almighty to awaken us. Similarly, the kohen Gadol would remain awake the entire night before Yom Kippur in preparation for his encounter with G-d the following day. Indeed, this encounter takes place in the Kodesh Ha-kodashim, where G-d appears in the cloud of the incense - in a clouded, obscured revelation. This type of revelation requires active effort and preparation, as opposed the direct revelation at Sinai, which could be attained passively. This may also mark the distinction between the first and second sets of tablets. The Ramban explains that the first tablets contained the Ten Commandments as recorded in Parashat Yitro, while the second tablets featured the commandments as they appear in Parashat Vaetchanan. The two sets of commandments differ significantly from one another, particularly in their presentation of the mitzva of Shabbat. It stands to reason that Moshe repeats the mitzva of Shabbat when introducing the Mishkan to Benei Yisrael (at the beginning of Parashat Vayakhel) because the content of this commandment underwent a certain change with Moshe's receiving the second tablets. In Parashat Yitro, G-d bases the institution of Shabbat on the fact that "in six days G-d made heaven and earth and sea... and He rested on the seventh day" (20:11). The Vaetchanan version, however, presents a different reason for Shabbat: "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt... therefore the Lord your G-d has commanded you to observe the day of Shabbat" (Devarim 5:15). In the first Tablets, the individual need not expend any effort to understand the mitzva of Shabbat. He sees G-d and imitates Him - just as the Almighty "rested" on the seventh day,

so do we. In the second Tablets, by contrast, one cannot readily behold God. To appreciate this mitzva, then, one must recall the Egyptian bondage and thereby contemplate the meaning of Shabbat.

An additional discrepancy between the two different sets of Tablets relates to their manufacture. The first tablets were produced by G-d Himself. Presumably, they were not chiseled; G-d simply took two prefabricated slabs and engraved the commandments thereupon. In the situation prior to the Golden Calf, the natural order was complete and G-d revealed Himself therein. One saw Him without searching and discovered Him without effort. In such circumstances, G-d could take a primitive, undeveloped object from the natural world and inscribe upon it the Divine Word. The second tablets, as we know, were manufactured by Moshe. It seems that G-d did not even instruct Moshe how to make them; he worked independently. The writing was not engraved upon the tablets, but rather written on them. By this point G-d was not directly revealed through nature, and, consequently, one needed to perfect nature to see Him. The significance of brit mila - circumcision - also relates to this idea. Adam was "born" circumcised; nature needed no further processing or development. One may even suggest that Adam had a foreskin, but it constituted no problem whatsoever. Nature was perfect and did not call out for any form of correction or improvement. Rabbi Akiva's celebrated remark that "the work of humans is superior to that of the Almighty," as evidenced by the superior quality of bread over wheat (Tanchuma Tazria, 5), likely refers specifically to the aftermath of Adam's sin. In fact, Adam did not need to bake any bread; he plucked fruits straight from the tree and ate. Only after the sin did he fall under the decree, "By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat," at which point he needed to perfect nature, to turn the wheat into loaves of bread through the painstaking processes of agriculture and baking. Nature was no longer perfect. Only when Am Yisrael experiences difficult times does the Almighty reveal Himself to them and dwell among them. During times of oppression, Benei Yisrael take the ark with them to battle, symbolizing the accompaniment of God's Presence. In such situations, one needs not labor to find the Almighty: "Since the Lord your G-d moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you..." (Devarim 23:15). (Originally delivered on Leil Shabbat Parashat Ki-Tisa, 5755 [1995].)

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: February 20, 2003 To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Ki Sisa
"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Ki Sisa

Appreciate It While You Have It

When the Torah teaches about Moshe receiving the Luchos [Ten Commandments] on Tablets of Stone, the Torah says that they were written by the Finger of G-d (etzba Elokim) [Shmos 31:18]. No further details are provided. Later in the parsha, just prior to Moshe's breaking the Luchos, the Torah reveals more about the

Luchos -- they were miraculously readable from both sides, even though the letters penetrated the entire width of the stone [32:15 - 16]. The Torah describes the Luchos in superlative terms: "The Luchos were G-d's handiwork, and the script was the script of G-d, engraved on the Luchos."

The logical location to describe the unique nature of the Luchos was the moment when they were first given, rather than when they were about to be broken. The Torah does the exact opposite. Why is that?

I saw an observation from the Shemen HaTov. Perhaps the Torah is teaching us a lesson that not only applies to the Luchos, but also applies to life in general. The lesson is that whenever we possess something for a long, almost indefinite time, we fail to appreciate what we have. It is only when one is on the verge of losing that which he possesses, that he first begins to realize its magnificence and beauty. When we love and are close to people and we think that we will have them indefinitely, human nature is to take the people for granted. However, when we are faced with the specter of losing somebody, and we know that our time with him or her is limited, then we suddenly begin to realize the preciousness of what we have and of every moment with that person. Our attitude then totally changes.

Perhaps the pasuk is trying to emphasize this lesson. When Moshe descended from the mountain with the Luchos, and was about to break them, then we suddenly pause. For the first time, we consider the uniqueness and the magnificence of those Luchos.

This is a lesson that has countless examples throughout our lives. One of the most appropriate examples relates to Yeshiva students. I tell this lesson over to my students frequently, but I still do not feel that I say it often enough. The overriding sentiment of anyone who ever learned in a Yeshiva is that they did not appreciate the experience while they had it. In retrospect, they look back and see how precious the experience was when they did have it.

When I travel and meet former students, they invariably tell me that they remember my lecturing them that they should take advantage of their years in Yeshiva because they will be the 'best years of their life'. Time and again they tell me, "You were right!" While one is in Yeshiva, the time stretches out in front of him and can seem infinite. Unfortunately, that is not the case. It is a limited amount of time.

A person's approach becomes different when he realizes that his time in Yeshiva is limited -- for example, if he has the luxury of returning to the Yeshiva for a short period after taking off a year or two.

The food in Yeshiva might not be all that it could be and dorm life has its problems. There are many little 'complaints' that one has when he lives in Yeshiva. But the overall experience is so rewarding and so rich and so unique. The test is to see the forest and not get caught up in the trees.

And so it is with child rearing. It requires significant effort to raise little children. They can sap someone's energy and drain him physically. But when the person grows older and sees his children grown up, he will look back and say, "those wonderful years flew by all too quickly".

And so it is with our relationships with our parents. Yes, there can be tensions and hassles. Sometimes life can be trying for both parents and children. But many people fail to realize the blessing that we have when we can still turn to a parent.

One of the biggest tests of life is to appreciate a situation while we are still experiencing it. Life is far too fleeting because we are overwhelmed by the nitty-gritty and the little bumps in the road. We simply do not have the time and peace of mind to appreciate what we have.

This is the test of life that cuts across generations. It faces people in all aspects of their lives. We even take our jobs for granted. There is a fallacy in the mind of many Americans who look anxiously forward to their 65th birthday, when they can retire. After a person retires, what will he do the next morning? There are only so many times that a person can read the newspaper. If a person has the physical ability to be active and productive, that should be valued and acted upon.

This is the lesson that the Torah is teaching us. We only notice that the Luchos are the miraculous handiwork of G-d, when we are about to lose them. The challenge is to appreciate what we have while we still have it.

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dhoffman@torah.org These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 364, The Melacha of Memachek. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrاند, Copyright © 2003 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing. Project Genesis - Torah.org is a recognized charity and depends upon your support. Please help us by visiting <http://torah.org/support/> for information on class dedications, memorials, annual giving and more. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/>

From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalists@shemayisrael.com] Sent: February 20, 2003 To: Peninim Parsha Subject: PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM PARSHAS KI SISA

The entire people removed the gold rings that were in their ears and brought them to Aharon. (32:3)

Is this not the way it usually is - the nouveau riche take their money and throw it around? In a public display of their insecurity, those who have suddenly come into wealth - or even those who have been raised in opulence - will sometimes use their wealth to make a statement, to impress their opinion upon others, or simply to extract honor and respect. Wealth can and should be used to attain positive goals. There are so many who do so. For some reason, those who lack the astuteness and self-esteem to use their money wisely seem to overshadow the rest. Klal Yisrael had recently been liberated from Egypt after suffering two hundred years of backbreaking, degrading labor. They left wealthy, and they added to their newly found wealth at the Yam Suf, when the Egyptians drowned. They should have exhibited gratitude to the Almighty who gave them everything; to Moshe Rabbeinu, their quintessential leader who did so much for them; to Aharon HaKohen, who was not only a leader, but also their friend. The money went to their collective heads, however, and they lost it. It seems like history repeats itself - which it does. Klal Yisrael gets a little bit of money and lo and behold, "Vayishman Yeshurun va'yivat," "Yeshurun / Yisrael waxed fat and rebelled." (Devarim 32:15) Is this the way it has to be? In Parashas Bo (11:2), Hashem instructed Moshe Rabbeinu, "Please speak into the ears of the people, and a man shall ask from his neighbor and a woman shall ask from her neighbor utensils of silver and gold." Rashi cites Chazal in the Talmud Berachos 9a who say that Hashem asked Moshe using the word na, which means please, as if it were a special request: "Please ask the people to request these silver and gold vessels." We can understand that when we ask a person to undertake a mission of some difficulty we say, "please." In this case, Hashem was requesting that they

appropriate the Egyptian silver and gold. Is that so difficult? Do people have to be convinced to take money? Why, then, did Hashem emphasize, "please"?

The Gerrer Rebbe, z.l., the Bais Yisrael, explains that Klal Yisrael were acutely aware that taking money is not a simple endeavor. This would be the newly liberated Jewish slaves' first encounter with the challenges that arise from money. They understood that the temptations that presented themselves with money could, at times, be overwhelming. This is why Hashem had to say, "Please take the money."

The Rebbe adds that for this reason they were told to "borrow" the money. Hashem felt that Jews should view material wealth as being on loan to them temporarily. When a person has something on loan, his excitement about the possession is limited due to its temporal nature. The pasuk teaches us how to view materialism: as something that has been borrowed - something which, at anytime, can be taken away from him.

Returning to the pasuk in Sefer Devarim 37:15 which describes Klal Yisrael's inability to cope with the challenge of material wealth, Sforno explains that the pesukim are telling us that when Klal Yisrael falls prey to materialism and affluence, when they turn towards physical gratification as a way of life, ignoring the spiritual dimension, there is only one antidote: exile. Only exile with its consequent poverty and deprivation relieve the symptoms of physical indulgence. Addressing the words of Sforno, Horav Elya Svei, Shlita, notes that we have endured numerous "exiles" during the last 2,000 years of galus, exile. There has been one common denominator throughout these various stages of exile: poverty. We have always been poor. While there have been individual Jews, specific periods and certain areas throughout history for whom this has not been case, for the most part, the Jews, have been poor throughout their bitter exile. We have only to peruse history, to view pictures, to research the museums, and we will see one thing: poverty. This was Hashem's therapy, His method of rectifying our past.

This would all be fine if Europe had been the last stop in our exile. It was not destined to be. It is well known that Rav Chaim Volozhiner, zl, predicted that America would be our last exile before the advent of Moshiach. Hopefully, this is our last exile as we prepare for Moshiach Tzidkeinu to herald the Final Redemption. What about the poverty? We may not all be wealthy, but does one really see here in America the abject poverty that defined the European exile? True, there are many Jews who barely scrape out a living, but it is a far cry from Europe. Who ever heard of a chassan not having a new suit for his wedding? We are not talking Armani, but in Europe it was not unheard of for a chosson not to have new clothes for his wedding. Why is America different? Is not poverty an essential requisite of galus? Horav Svei suggests that the European Holocaust, the cataclysmic tragedy that destroyed such a large portion of our People, must have been the final atonement for the sin of "Vayishman Yeshurun." We have paid our dues. We have been poor long enough. We can now have affluence once again. Luxury is no longer a dream. It can be a reality. We have a new opportunity to live as we did thousands of years ago. The American exile is our chance to experience material wealth and pleasure and to see if we can now rise to the challenge without succumbing to its blandishments. The American exile affords the opportunity for nice homes, cars, food on the table and money in the bank - and not to rebel. We have paid the terrible price of rebellion for 2,500 years. We have lived in exile under the most primitive and poverty-stricken conditions, all because we did not know how to deal with the temptations that arise from wealth. Can we learn to use this opportunity of material blessing for a positive purpose, to spread Torah, perform acts of loving -

kindness, and raise the banner of Hashem throughout the world? Time will tell. We must remember, however, it is a test that we must pass.

Hashem relented regarding the evil that He declared He would do to His people. Moshe turned and descended from the mountain, with the two Tablets of Testimony in his hand, Tablets inscribed on both their sides; they were inscribed on one side and the other. (32:14,15)

Prior to the chet ha'egel, sin of the Golden Calf, when the Torah mentions that Hashem gave Moshe the Luchos, the Torah describes that they were made of stone written with the E tzba Elokim, finger of G-d. Now, after the sin, and after mentioning that Hashem relented from the punishment He was prepared to mete out, the Torah records an added detail about the Luchos - "inscribed on both their sides; inscribed on one side and the other." Why not mention the complete description right away? Is there some reason that the Torah waited until after the tragic rebellion with the Golden Calf before adding this detail about the Luchos' inscription?

In his sefer Areshes Sefaseinu, Horav Schlesinger, Shlita, cites the Kedushas Yom Tov who gives the following explanation: In the Talmud Kiddushin 30b, Chazal teach us that the Torah which was given to us through Moshe has a unique characteristic. If a person studies it correctly, he merits its therapeutic qualities. If he does not, it will be for him a poison, destroying him. How can it be that the Torah which is referred to as Toras Chaim, the Living Torah, the Torah of life, should have a deadly effect upon he who does not merit? How could it suddenly transform life to death? Chazal explain that Hashem says to Klal Yisrael, "My son, I created the yetzer hora, evil inclination, and I also created the Torah as its antidote. If you study the Torah, you will be protected from its wiles. You will not fall into its hands." The Torah is truly a medicine, an antidote against evil. It does not destroy. If one does not study, if he does not avail himself of its therapeutic powers, however, he will fall prey to the evil that is out there.

Basically, the answer is simple. It all depends upon one's attitude and approach to Torah study. If one studies lishmah, for "its" sake, to fulfill Hashem's command, to give Hashem nachas ruach, satisfaction, then Torah protects him. He will merit Siyata Dishmaya, Divine Assistance, and the Torah is for him a sam hachayim, life-sustaining elixir. If he studies Torah, however, for the wrong reasons, if he continues along his merry way, disregarding the mitzvos that are inscribed in the Torah, at times even intentionally - then the Torah will turn into a sam ha'ma'ves, poison, that will destroy him. This is the meaning of the Luchos that were inscribed on both sides. A person should not think that there is only one side to the Torah and that one who studies it will surely overcome the blandishments of the yetzer hora. This is not true. The Torah/Luchos were "inscribed on one side and on the other." Only if one studies Torah lishmah, for the right reasons, will he succeed in benefiting from its therapeutic effect.

With this in mind, Horav P. Friedman, Shlita, explains why the Torah detailed the Luchos' inscription following its placement of the incident of the Golden Calf. The Torah is responding to a compelling question. Why did Moshe break the Luchos? Why did he not descend with them and give them to the Jewish revelers? If its healing powers are so extraordinary, why could it not bring back the sinners? Give them the Torah, and they would change! This is a powerful question. We reach out to everyone, but what about the sinners of the Golden Calf?

The answer is written in the Torah. The Luchos are inscribed on both sides -- two sides to the coin of Torah. Not everyone is prepared to receive the Torah. For one who is not appropriately prepared, it can be poison. The sinners of the Golden Calf were at that moment idol worshippers. They were not spiritually fit to

receive the Torah. It would have an adverse effect on them. This is why Moshe decided to shatter the Luchos and not give them to Klal Yisrael.

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RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

THE PRACTICAL TORAH

Ki Sissa

CELEBRATING A JOYOUS OCCASION

Introduction

Blessed is He Who gave us the Torah of truth and implanted eternal life within us.

The Tur (Orach Chaim Siman 139) explains that this phrase, which is recited by one who receives an Aliyah to the Torah after his section has been read, contains a reference to both the Torah SheBichsav, the written Torah, and the Torah SheBaal Peh, the Oral Torah; the words Toras Emes, the Torah of truth, describe the former, while the words VeChayai Olam Natah Bisochainu, and He implanted eternal life within us, refer to the latter. This explanation is quoted in the Shulchan Aruch (Ibid. Sif 10) as well. In explaining the second phrase, which mentions a nityah, an implanting, must be referring to the Torah SheBaal Peh the Tur (Ibid.) cites a Posuk in Koheles (12:11), which is also quoted by the Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Sif Katan 34), that compares the words of the Chachomim, meaning that which is part of the Oral Tradition and is not written, to nails that are implanted, or well driven in, and are thus permanent, as explained by Rashi (Ibid. s.v. U'KMishmaros). Rashi (Ibid.) also notes that just as something which has been planted grows and multiplies, so too do the words of the Chachomim grow and multiply when examined and investigated.

The Netziv, in his introduction to his commentary called Ha'amek She'eilah on the She'iltos of Rav Achai Gaon (Kadmas HaEmek, Perek 2 Ot 8), explains that this Posuk in Koheles (Ibid.) makes reference to two different types of Gedolei Torah in every generation. There are some, called Chochochim, scholars, who are able to extract Halacha through a penetrating, in-depth analysis of Pesukim, and there are others, called Baalei Osefos, masters of collection, who are able to gather Halachos that are scattered in different places and organize them in an orderly fashion. The Netziv (Ibid.) then notes that it is the words of these masters of collection that are likened to implanted nails because nails are banged in an organized manner and are thus functional; so too are the words of these masters because, when collected and well-organized, they are more easily remembered and understood. The Sdei Chemed (Klalim, in Hakdamah L'Maareches HaLamed, Hisnatzlus HaMichaber), in a similar vein, indicates that it is important for one who has many Seforim (or who has access to many Seforim) to collect worthwhile information from them and present it clearly to others.

The Sefer Pele Yoetz (Chelek 1, "Asefah") writes of the great service performed by those in every generation who prepared anthologies and digests of Halacha, saying that they prevent the Torah from being forgotten, and referring to the Gemara in Berachos (64a. See Rashi there s.v. LiMari) which implies that such works are indispensable. It is thus obvious, as the Netziv (Ibid.) concludes, that there is great value to organizing and clearly presenting Halacha, and that works which successfully accomplish this are an integral part of the Torah SheBaal Peh, which is described as Chayai Olam, the eternal life, as mentioned above. It is worth noting that the Kaf HaChaim (Orach Chaim Ibid. Ot 54) points out that this Beracha, which makes reference to the Torah SheBaal Peh, as stated above, is recited by one who receives an Aliyah specifically after his portion of the Torah has

been read because after one reads (or hears someone else read) from the Torah SheBichsav, he understands clearly that it is impossible to properly comprehend the Torah SheBichsav without the Torah SheBaal Peh, and he thus must recite a Beracha which refers to the Torah SheBaal Peh.

There is a long-standing practice among Jews to spend time on Shabbos studying Halachos, as taught by the rabbinic leaders who transmit the Torah SheBaal Peh. According to the Midrash cited in the Yalkut Shimoni at the beginning of Parshas VaYakhel (Chelek 1 Remez 408), Hashem Himself instructed Moshe Rabbeinu to assemble the people and to publicly teach them the Halachos of Shabbos, so that the leaders of future generations will see this example and learn that they too must gather the people on each and every Shabbos and assemble them in the Beis HaMidrash where they can teach Torah and Halacha. Along these lines, the Chofetz Chaim (Sefer Netzach Yisrael, Perek 38) documents the importance of learning Torah on Shabbos. It appears from the Tosefta in Sanhedrin (Perek 7 Halacha 1) that there was a Beis HaMidrash on the Har HaBayis, the Temple Mount, which was used for this purpose; the Gemara in Sanhedrin (88b) likewise indicates that the members of the Sanhedrin would sit in this part of the Har HaBayis, and implies that they were available on Shabbos (and Yom Tov) to address questions in Halacha, since they would not actually judge cases on those days, as noted by Rashi (Ibid. s.v. Yoshvin). The Rambam (Hilchos Sanhedrin Perek 3 Halacha 1) also writes that the members of the Sanhedrin would sit on Shabbos and Yom Tov in the Beis HaMidrash on the Har HaBayis.

It is clear from the comments of Rashi on the Mishnah in Shabbos (115a s.v. Bein SheAin) that the primary focus of learning on Shabbos, particularly for people who worked all week and had little time to learn, was in the area of Halacha, as stressed by the Mishnah Berurah (Orach Chaim Siman 290 Sif Katan 6) the Gemara in Berachos (6b) implies that people would run to hear the Shiur, known as the ~, which examined this subject. It seems from several sources that the specific Halachos discussed on a particular Shabbos, as noted by the Kaf HaChaim (Ibid. Ot 9) were connected to the Parshas HaShavua (See the Introduction of Harav Shmuel Kalman Mirsky to HaSheiltos D'Rav Achai Gaon, Machon Sura edition, Perek 2), excepted around Yom Tov time when the Halachos of Yom Tov were focused upon, as indicated by the Gemara in Pesachim (6a), among other places, and codified in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim Siman 429 Sif 1 and see Poskim there). This may be based on the idea expressed by the Gemara in Sanhedrin (101a) which speaks highly of someone who studies something in its proper time. It would seem from all of the above that it is highly appropriate today as well to study topics in Halacha on Shabbos, particularly topics which relate to the Parshas HaShavua.

From: SHLOMO KATZ [skatz@torah.org] Sent: February 20, 2003 To: hamaayan@torah.org Subject: HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Ki Tissa Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz Ki Tissa: Two Types of Shabbat Volume XVII, No. 21

In this week's parashah, we read of the sin of the Golden Calf, of Hashem's plan to destroy Bnei Yisrael, and of Moshe Rabbeinu's prayers that saved them. Hashem offered to make Moshe's descendants into a great nation in place of Bnei Yisrael, but Moshe refused. The Midrash says, "Because Moshe said (32:32), '[And now, if You would but forgive their sin -] and if not, erase me now from Your book that You have written,' Moshe earned that Hashem would answer his prayers when Korach rebelled." R' Avraham Bornstein z"l (1839-1910; the Sochatover Rebbe and author of several important halachic works) explained:

How could Moshe pray for the death of Korach? No doubt, Korach deserved to die, for by challenging Moshe's leadership, he effectively

challenged the legitimacy of the Torah that Moshe gave! Yet, his attack on Moshe was very personal. How could Moshe be certain that his own motives in praying for Korach's death were pure? After all, one who prays for harm to come to another Jew risks losing his own life in This World and the World-to-Come!

In answer, R' Bornstein cited the teaching of the Arizal (R' Yitzchak Luria z"l; 1534-1572) that Moshe did not become the great person that he was in one day. Like everyone else, he underwent a growth process. The crowning moment in that process was when he made the statement, "If not, erase me now from Your book that You have written." As the Gemara paraphrases it, Moshe said: "Let one thousand `Moshes' be lost, but let not one fingernail of the Jewish people be harmed." At that moment, when Moshe demonstrated his willingness to give up both worlds for the sake of the Jewish people, he demonstrated the complete negation of self that made it possible for him to pray for Korach's demise later. (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

"The wealthy shall not increase and the destitute shall not decrease from half a shekel." (30:15)

R' Shlomo Yosef Zevin z"l (see page 4) writes: It is now common in many countries to tax "progressively," meaning that not only do the wealthy pay more taxes because they have a bigger taxable base (e.g., higher incomes), they also pay at a higher rate. This is not a new idea, writes R' Zevin. It is found in the Mishnah (Peah 1:2): "One should give not less than 1/60 of his field as peah [i.e. leaving part of the field unharvested so the poor can come and take for themselves]." The mishnah continues: "Although [according to Torah law] there is no minimum level of peah, it all depends on the size of the field." Commentaries ask: What is the meaning of the last phrase, "it all depends on the size of the field"? Of course, the larger the field, the more peah one will give! The answer is that the mishnah is describing a progressive tax system. According to Torah law, there is no minimum amount that a person must give as peah. However, the Sages decreed a minimum - 1/60 of the field. Nevertheless, it all depends on the size of the field, and one who has a larger field should give at a higher rate than 1/60.

On the other hand, the Torah also imposes flat taxes, which require everyone to pay the same thing. Our verse is an example of a flat tax. Why? So that no person would think that the Mishkan / Tabernacle or Bet Hamikdash / Temple belonged to him more than to his poorer neighbor. Indeed, it was for this reason that each person gave half a shekel, to remind him that he made only part of the contribution.

In this light we can better understand the Gemara's teaching (Megillah 13b) that the merit of the mitzvah of the half-shekel outweighed the 10,000 shekels that Haman offered Achashveirosh. What this really means is that Jewish unity saved the Jewish people in the days of Haman. This is what Esther had in mind when she told Mordechai (Esther 4:16), "Go, gather all the Jews." And, the Jews were successful in battle against Haman's allies because (Esther 9:16) they "congregated and defended themselves." (LaTorah Ve'la'moadim p.118)

"He [Moshe] said, 'Show me Your glory'. He [G-d] said, 'I shall make all My goodness pass before you, and I shall call out with the Name Hashem before you; I shall show favor when I choose to show favor, and I shall show mercy when I choose to show mercy.'" (33:18-19)

R' Yechiel Michel Halevi Epstein z"l (1829-1907; see page 4) explains these verses as follows: Moshe's request was to be able to reach the highest possible level in his grasp of the Torah so that he could then attain the ultimate love for Hashem. Hashem answered him that He would reveal His "goodness" - an allusion to Torah, which is called "good" - and would teach him His Name - another reference to Torah, which kabbalists say is entirely made up of different Names of G-d.

Moshe was then concerned: How will other Jews ever attain such an understanding of the Torah? Hashem answered him: "I shall show favor when I choose to show favor." The Hebrew root "chen" (translated here as "favor") connotes something undeserved ("chinam"). Hashem assured Moshe, "I will teach the Torah even to the undeserving." G-d also promises in our verse to act mercifully, and it is based on this that we pray every morning (in the blessing before Shma): "The merciful Father, Who acts mercifully, have mercy on us, instill in our hearts to understand and elucidate, to listen, learn, teach . . ." [Without this explanation, it is difficult to understand the repeated references to G-d's mercy in this prayer, which primarily asks G-d to help us study Torah.] (Derashot Kol Ben Levi No. 15)

Shabbat "You shall observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. . . For six days, work may be done. . ." (From our parashah - 31:14-15)

R' Meir Simcha Hakohen z"l (1843-1926; rabbi of Dvinsk, Latvia; author of Ohr Sameach) notes that the prohibition on working on Shabbat is mentioned several times in the Torah. In some verses (for example Shmot 20:9), the Torah uses the active voice, "Six days shall you work." In other verses, the Torah uses the passive voice, as in the above verse from our parashah. The passive voice also is used in next week's parashah (35:2): "On six days, work may be done." Why?

He answers: In the sections in which the Torah uses the passive voice, the Torah also refers to the holiness of Shabbat. For example, our parashah says, "You shall observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. . . For six days, work may be done." Similarly, we read in next week's parashah, "On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you." In contrast, the verses that use the active voice do not refer to the holiness of Shabbat.

What does this teach? R' Meir Simcha explains: Our Sages teach, "When you do the Will of Hashem, your work will be done by others. When you do not do the Will of Hashem, you will have to do your own work." If we infuse the Shabbat with holiness, that holiness will rub-off on us, helping us do the Will of Hashem all week long. Then our work will be done passively, i.e., by others. However, when our Shabbat is not infused with holiness, then we will have to do our own work actively. (Meshech Chochmah)

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http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2000/parsha/rsch_kisisa.html

[from 3 years ago]

RABBI HERSCHEL SCHACHTER

THE TORAH SHE'BAAL PEH

Towards the end of Parshat Ki Tissa, Moshe is told by Hakadosh Baruch Hu that he will be giving him a two-part Torah – part biketav, in writing, and part baal peh, oral. These two parts of the Torah must be transmitted from generation to generation, each in its own fashion. The Torah shebiktav must be taught mitoch haketav, from reading from a written scroll, while the Torah shebaal peh must be transmitted orally. The Talmud (Temura 14b) records that at a certain point in history the Rabbis felt that there was a serious concern that the insistence on observing this point of law could possibly cause much of the Oral Torah to be forgotten, so they permitted the transmitting of the Torah shebaal peh from a written text. The expression used by the Talmud in this context is, "it is preferred that one letter of the Torah be violated, rather than have the entire Torah forgotten." Rambam (Mamrim 2:4) gives an analogy from medicine to understand this point: Sometimes a doctor will amputate an arm of the leg of a patient to keep him alive. Rambam, however, quotes from the Talmud (Yevamot 90b) that such a special "hetter" may be practiced only as a horaat shaah (on a temporary basis) and not ledorot (permanently).

Many centuries have passed and the Oral Torah is still being taught from written texts of Mishnayot, Talmud, and Shulchan Aruch. This poses an obvious problem. Can a practice which has continued for close to two thousand years be considered a horaat shaah because at some time in the future (i.e. leymot hamoshiach) that practice will be discontinued? This issue is dealt with in the classical halachic literature.

Exactly when this change in the style of teaching the Torah shebaal peh occurred was a question among the scholars. It is generally assumed today that this change occurred after the times of Ravina and Rav Ashi. The Talmud quotes several passages from the "Sefer of Adam Harishon", the book that G-d showed Adam about the transmission and the development of the Torah throughout the ages. One such line reads that, "Ravina and Rav Ashi will be the end of the period of horaah." Rav Moshe Soloveitchik took this to be referring to the aforementioned issue: because after their time the Torah shebaal peh was no longer being transmitted orally, the status of the Rabbis as "baalei horaah" was lowered halachically. All the

Rabbis from the days of Yehoshua until the days of Ravina and Rav Ashi had a higher level status of baalei horaah than those that followed them. We therefore assume that while in each generation the Rabbis are entitled to express their own original opinions, even in disagreement with those who preceded them, those following Ravina and Rav Ashi do not have the authority to disagree with the accepted positions of the Talmud. Only a "baal horaah" is entitled to an opinion, (Horaah being a definitive position on a matter of Torah shebaal peh) and the "baalei horaah" of the later period, when the Oral Torah was no longer being transmitted orally, are on a halachically lower level.

From: National Council of Young Israel YI_Torah@lb.bcentral.com To: List Member Subject: Parshat Ki Tissa
Parshat Ki Tissa 20 Adar I 5763 February 22, 2003

Guest Rabbi: RABBI FEIVEL WAGNER Young Israel of Forest Hills, NY
Last year, 5762, my father, z"l, passed away on 20 Adar. This year there are two Adars, commonly called a "Jewish leap year", and there are different opinions as to when the practices of yahrzeit apply. The Mechaber (Rav Yosef Karo, generally followed by Sephardim) is of the opinion that the yahrzeit is observed in the second Adar, while the Rema (Rav Moshe Isserles, usually followed by Ashkenazim) is of the opinion that it is observed in the first Adar. The Rema concludes that the prevalent Ashkenazi custom is to observe the yahrzeit in the first Adar, although there are those who observe both months. For a more complete treatment of the topic see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim Ch.568, Paragraph 7 (Aruch Hashulchan par. 13, 14; Kaf Hachim par.76). I will therefore, dedicate this Dvar Torah to the memory of my father, Harav Yisrael ben Harav Yitzchak Shmuel Wagner, z"l.

This week's parsha, Ki Seesa, contains one of the seminal events in the lives of the generation who lived in the desert, and in our history in general. The Chet Ha'egel, the sin of the golden calf, is considered to be a sin almost without parallel and its ramifications resound until this very day. One of the questions asked by many of the commentators is how could the generation that saw the great miracles in Egypt, at Yam Suf, and in the desert, that subsisted on man and the waters of the well, and that was protected by the clouds of glory, now worship a golden calf that they themselves saw fashioned from the gold that they gave? This generation saw the Al-Mighty in all His glory give them the Torah with its prohibition against making or worshipping idols. Yet, in 40 short days they decided to transfer their allegiance to idols which they themselves made. How can we understand this radical transformation?

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, in his magnificent work, the Kuzari (ma'amar 1, paragraph 97) offers one approach. The Jews were not guilty of idol worship; they were merely looking for a physical representation of HaShem. Just as they had been led by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire and seen in them the image of the Ribbono Shel Olam, they now needed another image to relate to. They were looking forward to Moshe bringing down the tablets, and putting them in an ark which would serve as the manifestation of HaShem's presence, but now that Moshe was not returning, their hopes were dashed. They therefore formed the calf to serve this purpose. They never thought of worshipping the golden calf as an independent power but rather looked at it as a way of representing HaShem, realizing that it was only HaShem who is the source of all powers in the world. Their mistake was in the concept that man has the right to create his own images of G-d. Only those images sanctioned and commanded by the Torah are permitted; all others, no matter how well meaning their designers might be, are still considered Avoda Zara. The Kuzari relates a poignant parable of the doctor who has remarkable medicines which can cure all sorts of diseases. A simple person, untrained in the use of these pills decides to dispense them to all who seek a cure. Not only are people not cured but many die as a result of taking the wrong medicine or dose. Only the doctor who is an expert in the use of these medicines, can properly prescribe the type and amount that are needed for each patient. In the same way, only HaShem can tell us how to serve Him and we must obey Him in order to produce the proper, healthy result. I would like to offer another explanation. From the words of Chazal and from Rashi's commentary it seems that the Jews were guilty of Avoda Zara in its coarsest form, that is, the belief in this golden calf's ability to act independently. The question is how could they possibly believe that after seeing and benefiting from the greatness of HaShem? The answer can be seen in the incident which forms the central theme of this Parsha's

Haftarah. Eliyahu HaNavi challenges the prophets of ba'al to a contest on Har HaCarmel. They and he will each slaughter an animal and place it on altars. They will beseech ba'al to bring down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. They, of course, were unsuccessful despite spending almost the whole day in prayer. Towards the evening, Eliyahu poured water on the altar and after it was completely soaked, asked HaShem to show His power by bringing down fire. HaShem did so and burned the entire sacrifice, as well as the altar. This was a clear miracle, proving to the people the power of HaShem, as well as the total impotence of ba'al. In fact, the Haftarah ends with the unified declaration of the Jewish people, "HaShem Hoo Ha'elokim, HaShem hoo Ha'elokim". The continuation of the Navi shows us that this was not a lasting change and within a relatively short time, the worship of ba'al returned. We have to ask again, why? After all, the people had seen an open manifestation of HaShem's power. How could they possibly backslide and begin once again to worship false gods? The answer to both of these incidents are the same. Man has the ability to rationalize anything he sees and in fact, the occurrence of miraculous events is not enough to keep a person's beliefs on target. Only a change in one's lifestyle and a commitment to a life based on Torah can have a lasting effect.

To show this idea in its application to more current events, many of us remember the days before, during, and after the Six Day War. In those terrible days before the war, the yishuv in Eretz Yisrael was under siege by our enemies, who according to all reports, outnumbered us by more than 10 to 1 and had weapons and arms much more powerful than ours. Then came the war. Each day we were very worried until, with the help of HaShem, we were able to overcome our enemies and retake much of what had been taken away from us. In the aftermath of the war, we were full of enthusiasm. Having seen the Yad HaShem, we were sure that our commitment to Torah would be strengthened and we would also be able to affect the large numbers of Jews who were distanced from a Jewish way of life. But we were sorely mistaken. Not only did we fail to have a wide reaching affect on many Jews, but we ourselves also did not raise our level of commitment. Within a short time it all dissipated. Only through a stronger commitment to Torah and mitzvos can we affect our future and that of all of Klal Yisrael. May we make that commitment and see the glorious future that the Torah promises.

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From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom List [parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il]
To: Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Ki Tisa
Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Ki Tisa (Exodus 30:11-34:35) By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Efrat, Israel - "And it happened that when he came close to the encampment and he saw the calf and the dancing that Moses became very angry; and he cast from his hands the tablets and he broke them under the mountain." (Exodus 32:19) Moses sees the Israelites in the midst of their sinful orgy around the golden calf, barely 40 days, after the Sinaitic Revelation, and commits an act which can only be justified in light of the prophet's zealous passion for G-d and His laws: he smashes the most sacred object in the world, the two tablets of G-d's Divine words. Our sages seem to justify his action, congratulating him on the fact that he broke them. And certainly Moses' act is understandable. But is it ideal, an action from which we must learn?

The haftarah tells us of a second leader, Elijah the Prophet, who in many ways is a prototype of Moses. Both are zealots, Moses having killed the Egyptian taskmaster and smashed the tablets, Elijah raging against the wicked Israeli monarchy and the Jewish idolaters. Elijah was chased by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel who wished to kill him, and Moses was on Pharaoh's "wanted" list, the prophet's life so much in danger that he had to flee to Midian. Moses demonstrated G-d's power at Sinai before 600,000 Israelites, and Elijah demonstrated G-d's power at Mount Carmel before 600,000 Israelites. Moses felt he had to break the commandments in order to establish them, and so he smashed the tablets of stone; Elijah felt he had to nullify the prohibition against building a "high altar" in order to demonstrate the superiority of G-d over Ba'al. Moses was critical of his people - "Listen, you rebels," and Elijah was critical of his - "How long will you stand in two opposite directions?" Moses split the Red Sea, Elijah split

the Jordan River. Moses suffered the indignity of Korach's rebellion without receiving the backing of his people, and Elijah hears from Queen Jezebel that "at this time tomorrow I shall have your soul" - and he knows that, only 24 hours after his great miracle at Mount Carmel, no-one could stop the Queen from carrying out her threat.

Most important of all, Elijah receives the very same message from G-d as did Moses. Let us examine Elijah's miracle in greater depth. The Israelites have long entered the Promised Land, the Holy Temple proudly adorns Mount Moriah, - but the Israelites have begun to worship the idol Baal and the King and Queen of Israel, Ahab and Jezebel, are themselves wicked idolaters. Elijah, out of deep frustration with Israel's backsliding, decides to perform a daring experiment to attempt to establish G-d's rule by transgressing G-d's law against building an altar outside of the Holy Temple: he makes an altar on Mount Carmel, sets up the 450 prophets of Israel with a bullock on one side, stands himself next to a bullock on the other side, and before 600,000 Israelites at the foot of the mountain challenges the other prophets to see whose prayers would be answered! He decided that "it was a time to do for G-d - even if it meant annulling a biblical law."

The prophets of Baal cried out, slashed themselves with knives and swords until their blood flowed, - all to no avail. Elijah prayed, "Answer me, O Lord, answer me," and a Divine fire descended from heaven consuming Elijah's bullock. 600,000 Israelites cry out "The Lord He is G-d" (Kings 1, 18:39). It is the moment of Elijah's greatest triumph - but a short-lived triumph it is. Many of the prophets of Baal are murdered, but Queen Jezebel tauntingly sends a message to Elijah: "At this time tomorrow, I shall make your soul like one of theirs" - in other words, I shall have you murdered (Kings 1, 19:2). And - she hints as well - no one will defend you. Elijah knows she's right! The Israelites have already demonstrated their short memory. The Prophet had every right to expect that the morning after his tour-de-force extravaganza at Mount Carmel, synagogues would be filled to overflowing, day schools would have long lines of students clamoring for entry, and adult education classes would be packed to the gills. That was hardly the situation; despite the inspired declaration just one day previous, the religious and ethical climate changed barely at all on the morning after. Elijah is profoundly disappointed - just as Moses must have been bitterly frustrated when the Jews worshipped the golden calf only forty days after the miraculous revelation at Sinai!

What happens in the very next chapter after the great tour-de-force miracle is most instructive. Elijah is distraught at the lack of religious response the morning after. He has no encore to perform. He now asks the Almighty to take his soul. G-d sends him back to Mount Horeb. There the Almighty passes before him, sends a powerful, mountain-breaking and rock-smattering wind, and teaches him: "Not in the wind is G-d, not in rushing thunder is G-d, not in fire is G-d - but in the still small voice" of love, kindness and human sensitivity - there is G-d to be found (Kings 1, 19)." The Almighty is teaching Elijah the very same message He attempted to teach Moses when he describes Himself as a G-d of love and compassion and tolerance: leaders can hope to influence not by majestic miracles but by silent sensitivity, by loving outreach.

Unfortunately, neither Moses nor Elijah seems to have been able to assimilate the message. Moses breaks the Tablets and strikes the rock, while Elijah brings down fire from heaven to consume Israeli generals and their men (Kings II,1). Both great prophets are not really of this world and so are not naturally buried - with Moses' burial place unknown to this day, and Elijah translated to heaven. Each are great prophets for the eternity of the generations, but not necessarily for the people of their generation. There is, however, one difference. Jewish lore, as expressed in the Talmud and the Midrash, emphasizes Malakhis' final words - with which all the Biblical prophecy ends - that Elijah will herald G-d's great and awesome period of Redemption when "the hearts of the parents will turn to the children and the hearts of the children to the parents." For our Sages this means that Elijah did accept G-d's words, that the great prophet is at every Seder celebration and at each circumcision rite, and that he understands his ministry to be binding familial generations with love and acceptance. And not only will Elijah, and not Moses, herald the Messiah; Elijah and not Moses will answer all questions, decide on all ritual and ethical questions, during the period of redemption. Apparently, the Messiah as well as the Torah can only be based on the still small voice of loving-kindness and tolerance.

Shabbat Shalom.

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm>

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From: Ohr Somayach [ohr@ohr.edu] To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Ki Tisa * TORAH WEEKLY * For the week ending 22 February 2003 / 20 Adar I 5763 from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

A Work of Craft "See, I have proclaimed by name Bezalel, son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Yehuda. I have filled him with a G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft ... to perform every craft of design." (31:2-3)

In Hebrew, there is no word for Art.

There is a Hebrew word, "melacha," that means "craft," but no word meaning Art.

What's the difference between Art and craft?

An artist can think he is G-d.

He starts off with a blank piece of paper and creates a universe. Being an artist is the closest a person can get to creation ex nihilo -- creation from nothing. The universe of the artist is entirely at the whim of its creator. He can draw and he can erase. He can form and he can fold. He can "create worlds" and he can "destroy them." The sky can be blue or gray. The next note could go up or down. And who says that all this has to be the way it is?

Me. The artist.

For the past two and half thousand years there has raged a global-historical conflict over the place of art in the world.

The ancient Greeks, who invented Art with a capital "A", claimed that Art is a doorway to ultimate truth. "Beauty in Truth, Truth, Beauty..." This Weltanschauung says that through art and artifice, you can reach the elemental truths of existence. Celebrating the surface, the way things look, said the ancient Greek, leads to the essence of things themselves.

The Jew says that the artifice and illusion leads only to greater illusion, unless that skill subordinates itself to the service of truth.

Art that is not for Art's sake is called craft. Craft knows it is the servant of another master.

The Talmud teaches that if you never saw the Second Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple), which Herod built, you never saw a beautiful building in your life. Its walls were constructed from blue/green marble and white Marmara marble. One layer was indented and the next protruded so that the plaster would adhere. Herod thought of covering the whole edifice with gold plate. The Rabbis told him to leave it as it was: unplastered and ungolded, since it looked better in its natural state with the different levels of green/blue and white resembling the waves of the sea.

"See, I have proclaimed by name Bezalel, son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Yehuda. I have filled him with a G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft ... to perform every craft of design."

Every talent has a place in Judaism. Every talent is a gift of G-dly spirit: A beautiful voice, a brilliant mind, the skill of an artist. Every talent is a gift - and a responsibility.

"By His breath the Heavens are spread (shifra)..." (Iyov 26:13).

G-d spreads aside the curtain of cloud to reveal that which is beyond. He disperses the clouds that conceal so we can see past the obstruction, past the surface. The word "spread," "shifra," has the same root as "shapir" which means "to beautify."

In Jewish thought, beauty means seeing past the surface to the essence. That which is beautiful is that which takes us beneath the surface, beyond the clouds, to reveal the endless blue heavens - to reveal the truth.

Similarly, the word for "ugly" and "opaque" in Hebrew are the same -

"achur." Something that conceals essence is ugly, however "beautiful" it might seem.

"Art for Art's sake" can never be a Jewish concept. For, if the definition of beauty is that which reveals, something that reveals nothing but itself can never be beautiful.

The true beauty of the Tabernacle and the Temples was that it was the place of the greatest revelation in this world. It revealed that existence is not bounded by the physical constraints of space and time. It demonstrated that this world is connected to that which is beyond this world.

It was a Work of Craft.

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RABBI 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"h 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" (repentance)?

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 G-d 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 HaDibrot" (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 G-d 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 G-d & therefore He will punish ...

2) POKED A'VON AVOT AL BA'ANIM L'NONEI 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 (G-d 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 worshipping 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 G-d 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). G-d 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 G-d 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 G-d and Avraham Avinu ("brit Avot") still remained. Moshe Rabeinu recalled this "brit" in his "tfilah":

"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 G-d 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 oref" 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.]

FIRST LUCHOT	SECOND LUCHOT
1) KEL KANA	KEL RACHUM V'CHANUN
2) POKED AVON... L'SONEI	POKED AVON AVOT AL BANIM...
3) O'SEH CHESED... L'OHAVEI	RAV CHESED V'EMET
	NOTZER CHESED L'ALAFIM...
4) LO Y'NAKEH	V'NAKEH, LO Y'NAKEH
5) LO YISAH L'FISHEICHEM...	NO'SAY AVON V'FESHA...
6) CHARON AF	ERECH A'PAYIM

We will now compare them, showing their contrast, according to the order of the thirteen midot:

SECOND LUCHOT	FIRST LUCHOT
HASHEM KEL RACHUM V'CHANUN	> (1) HASHEM KEL KANA rachum v'chanun based on 33:19 (see above)
a MERCIFUL God opposed to a JEALOUS God	
ERECH A'PAYIM	> (6) CHARON AF SLOW to anger opposed to INSTANT anger
RAV CHESED V'EMET	> (3) O'SEH CHESED... L'OHAVEI ABOUNDING kindness for all, potentially even for the wicked ("rasha v'tov lo") as opposed to EXACTING kindness limited to those who obey Him.

[Yet, even this abounding kindness for all must be complemented by the attributed of "emet" (truth).]
NOTZER CHESED L'ALAFIM > (3) O'SEH CHESED L'ALAFIM... L'OHAVEI

STORES His kindness, so that even if it not given immediately, it will ultimately be rewarded ("tzadik v'rah lo") as opposed to IMMEDIATE kindness.

NO'SAY AVON V'FESHA... > (5) LO YISAH L'FISHEICHEM .. FORGIVING sin as opposed to NOT FORGIVING sin.

V'NAKEH, LO Y'NAKEH > (4) LO Y'NAKEH SOMETIMES He will forgive, sometimes not (see Rashi, forgives those who perform t'shuva) as opposed to NEVER forgiving.

POKED AVON AVOT AL BANIM... > (2) POKED AVON... L'SONEI

He WITHHOLDS punishment for up to four generations (in anticipation of t'shuva) as opposed to EXTENDING punishment for up to four generations. (Even though these two phrases are almost identical, their context forces this interpretation. See Rashi and other m'phorshim.)

This amazing parallel demonstrates that each of the "13 midot" lies in direct contrast to the "midot" which were characteristic of the original covenant at Har Sinai. These Divine attributes of mercy allow Bnei Yisrael to 'enjoy' the "shchinah" even though they may not be worthy. "Midat ha'rachamim" allows man to approach G-d and develop a closer relationship without the necessity of immediate punishment for any transgression.

This explanation adds extra meaning to our comprehension and appreciation of the Slichot davening. The recitation of the "13 midot" comprises more than a mystical formula. It is a constant reminder of the conditions of the covenant of the 'second luchot'. God's attributes of mercy, as we have shown, DO NOT GUARANTEE automatic forgiveness. Rather, they ENABLE THE POSSIBILITY of pardon. As the pasuk stated, Hashem will forgive only he whom He chooses ("et asher a'chon... v'et asher arachem" 33:19!). To be worthy of that mercy, the individual must prove his sincerity to God, while accepting upon himself not to repeat his bad ways. The "13 midot" serve as a double reminder: (1) that "midat ha'rachamim" is possible; yet, (2) at the same time, it is NOT automatic. That recognition should encourage one who understands the terms of "brit 13" to search for and follow the proper path of "t'shuva".

"Y'hi ratzon", that our daily recitation of the "13 midot" in "t'achanun" will not only remind us to follow the proper path of "t'shuva", but also remind Hashem of our ultimate National destiny in hope that through His "midat ha'rachamim" He will lead us towards the proper path of redemption.

shabbat shalom, menachem