

Torah Tidbits

ב"ה

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OU
ישראל

י"ח אדר תשפ"ו - MAR. 7TH 2026

פרשת כי תשא
PARSHAT KI TISA

PARSHAT PARAH

Cheftza and Gavra – Shattering
and Carrying the Luchot
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Shabbat Specialness
Rebbetzin Shira Smiles
Page 30



ארבה את זרעכם... ונחלו לעולם
שמות ל"ב: י"ג

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT KI TISA ZMANIM:

CANDLES 5:04 PM • HAVDALA 6:18 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:58 PM

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Yafit Atlas// Matan Sacknovitz-Hain

COVER PHOTO Photographed by David Hochhauser



I made aliya in 2014 and live in Bet Shemesh. I took this photo in Ramat Gan (Highland Park - my hometown in English) on my way to work. I wonder if Rav Kook could have envisioned the technological breakthroughs, in the heart of silicon wadi.

A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

When setting out to return to the troubled encampment, the epicenter of the golden calf sin, Moshe is told: לך רד כי שחת עמר

“Go forth, descend.” Why the need of the obvious redundancy- “go forth” would have sufficed without the additional “descend”?

Rashi tells us that the word “descend” was a command to Moshe to diminish his “own” level of personal greatness. Moshe, humbly assumed the posture of a leader whose discouraged and alienated people require his time and attention in their basic challenges and struggles in faith. “Descend from your own lofty heights of perfection in order to deal with the corruption that besets your people. The personal pronoun stressed “your nation”, is meant to remind Moshe of his true duty, to remain firmly attached to the people in his charge, always. He must turn back, pick up the pieces and restore their unswerving loyalty to G-d’s Torah.

The Meshech Chochmah (Rabbi Meir Simcha HaCohen from Dvinsk 1843-1926) adds that this was a call to Moshe to descend and embark on introspection and self-examination which would enable Moshe to identify fully with the sinful Israelites and to understand the nature of their sin to begin rehabilitating the nation.

- Shabbat Shalom

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
March 4 - 14 / 15 - 25 Adar

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:12-5:00
Sunrise	6:03-5:51
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	8:57-8:49
Magen Avraham	8:21-8:13
Sof Zman Tefila	9:55-9:49
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:51-11:48
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:21-12:18
Plag Mincha	4:26-4:31
Sunset (Including Elevation)	5:43-5:50



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	Ki Tisa		Vayakhel/Pekudei	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	5:04	6:18	5:09	6:23
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	5:23	6:21	5:28	6:25
Beit Shemesh/RBS	5:23	6:19	5:28	6:24
Gush Etzion	5:21	6:18	5:26	6:23
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	5:21	6:19	5:26	6:24
Modiin/Chashmonaim	5:21	6:19	5:26	6:24
Netanya	5:21	6:19	5:26	6:25
Be'er Sheva	5:22	6:20	5:27	6:25
Rehovot	5:22	6:20	5:27	6:25
Petach Tikva	5:04	6:19	5:09	6:24
Ginot Shomron	5:20	6:18	5:26	6:24
Haifa / Zichron	5:11	6:19	5:16	6:24
Gush Shiloh	5:20	6:18	5:25	6:23
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	5:22	6:20	5:27	6:25
Givat Zeev	5:24	6:18	5:29	6:23
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	5:21	6:18	5:26	6:23
Ashkelon	5:23	6:21	5:28	6:26
Yad Binyamin	5:22	6:20	5:27	6:25
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	5:12	6:17	5:18	6:22
Golan	5:18	6:16	5:23	6:22
Nahariya/Maalot	5:19	6:18	5:25	6:24
Afula	5:19	6:18	5:25	6:23

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Ki Tisa - 6:58 PM • Vayakhel/Pekudei - 7:03 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Menachos 55



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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In my house growing up, there was a magnet on the refrigerator that read, “If I knew grandchildren were so great, I would have had them first.” It’s a funny joke, but I never fully understood the depth of that sentiment until recently. Last week, I had the tremendous privilege to attend an event that brought together two cherished memories and turned out to be one of the most emotional experiences I’ve had in a long time.

My grandson Binyamin, who is in first grade, received his first *siddur* at a beautiful school ceremony. So many positive memories came back to me from when I first received my own *siddur* in first grade. I was learning at RJJ in Staten Island, New York, and my teacher was Rabbi Pollack. Rabbi Pollack taught first grade for over six decades, and to this day I remember him as a remarkable teacher. He made sure to decorate the classroom with Hebrew words, and he encouraged all of us to learn the language so we could understand the *siddur* and *Chumash* we were going to study.

I can clearly remember the *siddur* we

received, a *Siddur Shilo*. You don’t see these around anymore; apparently, it was first printed before the Holocaust, and went through many editions since then. Anyway, I held onto this *siddur* so dearly, until it started coming apart just from sheer daily use, at which point we put it in the *genizah*.

At the ceremony, I had another memory, not as far back. I remember taking my children to their *siddur* parties when they learned at the Talmud Torah HaNachala in Har Nof. The head rabbi of the school, Rav Shmuel Katz, would speak and uplift the children, while Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, *zecher tzadik kadosh livracha*, the former Chief Rabbi of Israel and my personal rabbi, would be the one giving out the *siddurim* to the first graders. It was always so inspiring to see our children receiving their *siddur* from the rabbi, taking pictures, so happy and proud to get their first *siddur*. Every parent there treasured the moment and knew that their child would be taking this *siddur* and would be sitting next to them in *shul* and would be praying from it for many years to come, together with their siblings. But the thought of one day doing this for a grandchild felt very distant at the time.

What made last week’s event even more special was the fact that my grandson Binyamin is now learning in the exact same school that I attended when we moved to the greater Yerushalayim area: Beit Sefer Noam Kiryat Moshe. Noam Kiryat Moshe is where I met many of my friends, people I am still close with to this day. Some of them became rabbis and teachers, and even taught some of my

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grandchildren

and great-grandchildren

own children. Others became accountants, lawyers, and professionals in many fields. Whenever we meet, it is a real pleasure.

Standing at my grandson's *siddur* party, watching him do the movements for the play, all dressed up with the crown and the vest and everything to make the moment as beautiful as possible, was truly something. The way in which the school gives a *siddur* to a child, with his class *Rav* up there smiling, holding his hand, presenting him with the *siddur* with such love, together with the principal and the other teachers all enjoying an uplifting moment, was so incredibly executed. The older grades came up to sing as the choir for the evening, including my nephew Yosef Tuvia, who got up there to sing knowing that his cousin's son, Binyamin, was receiving his *siddur*. It was a very emotional moment for me.

But what stood out more than anything was the way the children spoke about their *siddurim*. They were all talking about the fact that *Mincha* was the last *tefillah* they had to pray without a *siddur*, and that now they would have their own. Of course, nobody ever stopped them from going to the shelves and taking a *siddur* to *daven* from. But now they have a *siddur* that is theirs, one that they feel personally connected to.

Whenever I think of my own *Siddur Shilo*, I have such positive feelings. It might not have been the most beautiful *siddur* in the world.



It might not have been the most updated edition or the most comfortable to hold. But the reality is that, that *siddur* will always have a warm place in my heart. And seeing my grandson Binyamin receive a *siddur* from his school, one that is so well put together, clear to the eye, the right size and colors, I know it will inspire him to connect so much better to his *siddur* and to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.



Whenever I come to visit

Binyamin in school, whether to talk to his class about my *Aliyah* story or for the school events, he always makes sure to point out to his teachers that his grandfather's picture, his *Zayde's* picture, is hanging

up on the wall as part of the eighth grade

Forever in our hearts
לעילוי נשמת

אסתר בת זושא ע"ה
Elyse Gelfand ע"ה

On her *yahrzeit* – י"ט אדר "

Gelfand, Samber,
and Saban families

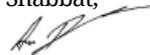
graduating class of Noam Kiryat Moshe. He is extremely proud to be learning in the same school that his *Zayde* attended.

I join my wife, my son, and my daughter-in-law in prayer that *b'ezrat Hashem* Binyamin should always *daven* from his heart and that his *tefillot* will go straight to the *Ribbono shel Olam*. May Hashem always shine him with blessings. May he and his siblings have successful lives, giving their parents endless Yiddishe *nachas*. May he take pride in the school where he is learning, and in the fact that at a young age he had a truly meaningful and emotional day together with his *Zayde* and his family. May that moment, *b'ezrat Hashem*, symbolize the beginning of a long life of heartfelt *davening*, deep connection with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and may his *tefillot*, together with those of his classmates and siblings, help bring *Mashiach* speedily in our days.

As Purim celebrations come to an end and we start preparing for Pesach and the special days that follow it, I'm thinking a lot about continuity, how Jewish life is built one moment at a time, in families and in communities. In our homes, we begin the careful work of getting ready for Pesach, clearing space and preparing for a renewed beginning. And at OU Israel, in these weeks, I am sitting with my incredible team working on a number of OU Israel flagship events that take place on Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. While

we are deep in the planning stages, working closely with the Jerusalem Municipality and our different partners coordinating the many details that allow a moment of *tefillah* to feel worthy of the day, I keep coming back to what these gatherings are really about. Yom HaAtzmaut in Yerushalayim is our collective pause to say thank you for the miracle of Jewish life restored in our land and for the privilege of building Jewish homes, families, and communities here. And Yom Yerushalayim on the *tayelet* in Armon HaNatziv, facing *Har Habayit*, reminds us that alongside gratitude we carry yearning, and that our *tefillot* are meant to lift us toward something even greater. I look forward to seeing you all at these events, as well as standing with Binyamin at the Yom HaAtzmaut Musical *Tefillah*, this time with his new *siddur*.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

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In loving memory of
Jack (Yaakov) Singer z"l
on his *yahrzeit* - March 2nd

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in this issue be לעילוי נשמתו

From his daughter - Judith Lipman

Lenny Davidman

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Determined Patience

Anticipation, waiting, looking forward. It is a difficult task to do these patiently, remaining focused on the goal and willing to wait for it, however long it takes. Yet it is that kind of dreaming and discipline that keeps us aiming high and avoiding settling for mediocrity.

This tension was at the core of the story of the Golden Calf, in which the Jewish people ran out of patience, lowering their standards and expectations from living under the leadership of the saintly Moshe to following the image of an animal. What a shocking change! Yet they made that adjustment because – after all – Moshe had been gone for forty days and they could now conceive of life without him.

This same issue may be the intent of the familiar verses about Shabbos that are found immediately before the story of the Golden Calf (Shemot 31:16). “The Jewish people shall guard the Shabbos so as to make the Shabbos an eternal covenant for their generations.” The *Ohr HaChaim* suggests that the mandate to “guard”

the Shabbos, *v’sham’ru*, relates to the use of that same term describing Yaakov’s attitude towards Yosef’s dreams, where it is written (Bereishit 37:11) that “his father guarded the matter,” *v’aviv shamar et hadavar*. There we are taught by Rashi that the term implies a carefully guarded hope as Yaakov was waiting and anticipating the fulfillment of Yosef’s dream.

It was this anticipation that prevented Yaakov from becoming reconciled with the loss of Yosef, as he maintained the hope and dream of being reunited with and seeing the future leadership of Yosef (37:35; see Rashi there). He could easily have become resigned to the apparent reality of Yosef’s death, but he chose to dream on, and the dream was ultimately fulfilled.

That is how we “make the Shabbat.” We wait for it, holding on with anticipation for the special quality of that day, not allowing ourselves to settle into the mundane world of our weekdays. The more we “wait for Shabbat,” the more we long for something deeper and calmer, something more connected and sacred than our regular days, the more we will experience Shabbat in that fashion.

This same attitude stands as the basis for the core value of *tz’piyah l’yeshuah*, the yearning for redemption that is expected of all of us. The world is not quite right, there is much that is still broken. The more comfortable we get with it as it is, the less likely we are to be able to see it arrive at its ultimate perfection.

Ours is the task of patience, waiting with determination to see our personal and collective dreams fulfilled, and never settling for anything less. ■



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OU... BEYOND KASHRUT

OU Israel Launches Frontline Support!

OU Israel empowers lives and communities in our homeland by building programs that meet people where life is happening. Within OU Israel's Anglos-in-Israel Division, we have launched Frontline Support, a new pilot initiative supporting English-speaking soldiers with three essentials throughout their service: connection, meaning, and mentorship.

Frontline Support is OU Israel's response to a simple truth: when a soldier has structure, they grow stronger. While some English-speaking soldiers enter the IDF with a built-in framework of Torah, mentorship, and community that carries them through service, many do not. Frontline was created to provide that stability, so committed soldiers can stay grounded in what matters while living the intensity of army life.

Through weekly Torah mentorship and a year-round rhythm of community connection, Frontline turns support into lived consistency. It reinforces identity, purpose, and spiritual strength, giving English-speaking soldiers something steady to rely on throughout their service — not just a moment of inspiration, but a framework that lasts.

Frontline Support soft launched this past month with individual learning and small get togethers. Mentorship has begun and we are excited to see the growth that will come in its first year. If you know of an English speaking IDF soldier who could benefit from Frontline Support please contact **Rav Ian Schwartz, Program Director at ian@ouisrael.org**

Each week, we share one OU Israel initiative empowering lives and communities in our homeland, supporting English-speaking *olim* in their *klita* and supporting Israel's most vulnerable teens to rebuild trust, confidence, and a future.



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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

PARSHAT KI TISA

The first third of the Parsha concludes instructions concerning the Mishkan. The rest of the Parsha is the story of the Golden Calf, concluding with reconciliation and forgiveness.

The first aliyot are among the longest in the Torah; the first is 44 verses, the second 47. The remaining are among the shortest; 5 aliyot, 48 verses.



1ST ALIYA (30:11-31:17)

All are to give a **half shekel** to be an atonement. The offerings are brought from these funds – and hence, all the people are represented equally as a remembrance and atonement. Make a **wash basin** of copper. Place it outside the Mishkan area, near the altar. The Kohanim must wash their hands and feet before service. Make **spiced anointing oil** to anoint the Mishkan, all its utensils and the Kohanim. This recipe is not to be made for personal body lotions. Make **incense** to place in front of the ark, the place that I will meet you. This incense is holy of holies. It is not to be made for your olfactory pleasure. I have called **Bezalel** and filled him with the Divine spirit to master all means of craftsmanship, in metals and in materials. He, with Ohaliav, will fashion all the things that I have commanded be made for the Mishkan. Keep **Shabbat** as a sign between Me and you for all time, for I am the One who sanctifies you. Do not do any melacha. It is an eternal sign that in six days I made the world and

in the seventh ceased.

This very long aliya allows the entire story of the Golden Calf to be told in the Levi aliya, the second, as the Leviim did not participate in the Golden Calf.

These instructions serve to complete the preparations for the actual building of the Mishkan. The Mishkan endeavour has different parts. The building. The people to run it. Those instructions have been given.

Now we switch to enablers, not the service itself but the facilitators. Money for offerings. Oil to anoint, to inaugurate. Wash basin for daily preparation to serve. And the craftsmen to lead the demanding project of building all these things.

With these final instructions, the construction of the space for the Shechina to dwell in our midst may begin.



2ND ALIYA (31:18-33:11)

While Moshe is on the mountain receiving the luchot, the people below are making a golden calf. G-d tells Moshe that his people have made a golden calf. He wants to destroy them and begin anew with Moshe. Moshe pleads on their behalf. G-d relents. Moshe descends with Divinely inscribed tablets. When he sees the golden calf, he smashes the tablets. Moshe confronts Aharon. Aharon explains what happened. At the behest of Moshe, the Leviim punish the 3,000 guilty. Moshe ascends the mountain. He admits the sin of the people, asking for forgiveness. And if not, remove me from the book. G-d counters that those who sin will be the ones to be erased. Now,

go, led by My angel and lead the people to the Land. For I will not be in your midst lest you be destroyed. The people are distraught. Moshe moves the tent of meeting to outside of the camp, for there G-d will now speak with him. A cloud descended when G-d spoke with Moshe. The people saw and bowed. G-d spoke to Moshe face to face, as people do.

There is a debate when chronologically the story of the Golden Calf occurs. However, either way, there is a chronology as it is recorded in the Torah for a reason.

The creation of a place for the Shechina to dwell in our midst is shattered by the Golden Calf. G-d is telling us He wants to be imminent, to be close to us, to dwell in the Mishkan. And we spit in His face, creating the Golden Calf, turning our backs on Him.

The story of the Golden Calf is rich in many details. However, the primary theme in the flow of the Torah is Divine immanence. How can the plan for the Shechina to dwell in our midst weather this terrible rejection? He wants to be with us. We turn our back.

The story of the Golden Calf takes place in two locations: top of the mountain and bottom of the mountain. The terrible sin of building the Golden Calf occurs at the bottom of the mountain but far more space in the Torah is dedicated to the top of the mountain. 21 verses describe the action taking place down the mountain. 45 verses describe the interaction between G-d and Moshe on the top of the mountain.

The story is not primarily the story of the sin. It is the story of G-d and man. How will this terrible sin damage the story of the Shechina descending, dwelling in our midst? Is that dream lost?

Moshe works hard, because before we can get to the intimacy of the Shechina with man

we have to be forgiven. That is first.

G-d wants to destroy the people and begin anew with Moshe as the forefather.

Moshe pleads: don't do that. He starts before he has even gone down the mountain and seen the Golden Calf. He is successful in at least forbearance; the people will not be destroyed.

After going down, smashing the luchot, he goes back up the mountain. Now, Moshe has a big job. He wants to recover Paradise lost. He wants forgiveness, a return to the Shechina in our midst.

He is not successful. Well, somewhat. The march to the Land of Israel will continue. But the dream of the march with the Shechina in our midst? No. G-d tells Moshe that an angel will lead them. But not with Me in their midst.



3RD ALIYA (33:12-16)

Moshe challenges G-d: If I have found favor in your eyes, tell me Your ways. That way I can act properly, for this is, after all, Your people. G-d: I will guide you. Moshe: Don't move us from here unless Your Face goes with us.

Moshe feels emboldened. The march to the Land will continue. That is such a relief. Forgiveness.

But Moshe presses. We want You. We don't want that angel. We want Your Face in our midst.

This is an echo of Mt. Sinai. At Sinai G-d proposed to speak to Moshe and the people would overhear. The people said no way. We all want to hear His Voice. And G-d accepted that and spoke to all the people

Moshe thinks: He wants us. He acquiesced at Sinai to our desire to hear His Voice. He wants to be in our midst. I'll push harder. Not the angel. We want You.



4TH ALIYA (33:17-23)

G-d: I will do as you say. Moshe: show me Your kavod, Your glory. G-d: I will pass before you, will call My name before you, show mercy to whom I choose to show mercy to. You cannot see My face and survive. Stand in the nook in the rock; I will pass in front of you. You will see My back but My face you will not see.

G-d acquiesces to Moshe's demand for closeness. To a point. Moshe wants Your Face. I want Your fullness, Your glory. G-d does not back off. I will reveal but with limits: glimpses from behind need suffice.

Moshe wants the Face. He gets the back of the head. This allegory is the answer to Moshe's desire to know G-d's Ways. I Will Be in your midst, He says, but you are going to have to live with seeing the back of my head. Man can never fathom the Divine.

This exchange is what we all sense in the challenge of this world. We see the Divine, but we don't. We perceive, but from behind. We want a peek but must live without.



5TH ALIYA (34:1-9)

G-d instructs Moshe to make a second set of tablets. Moshe ascends the mountain by himself. G-d descends in a cloud and he calls: G-d, G-d, Merciful... the 13 attributes of mercy. Moshe bows. And says: please be in our midst, for though the people are obstinate, forgive their sins.

The return to Paradise lost, the return to

**May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be אמי מורת' לע"נ**

Helen Winkler a"h
חיה אסתר בת ישראל משה ע"ה
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the rarefied relationship of G-d's wanting to be close to man continues. Replace the broken tablets. Our closeness is returning. For I, says G-d, am forgiving, full of mercy.

Moshe, appreciative of the forgiveness, pushes again. Be in our midst.



6TH ALIYA (34:10-26)

G-d responded: I am making a covenant. You will see signs and wonders, G-d's work that is awesome. You keep what I command. Don't make a pact with the people in the Land, for it will lead to you worshipping idols, and to marriage with them. Keep our festivals, our Shabbat, our laws in our Temple.

The response to Moshe's pleading that He be in our midst? Ok. But you need to do your part. The march to the Land of Israel continues. We are back to where we were before the sin. But. Don't do that again. I Will Be Loyal to you, but you need to be loyal to Me. No idols. Come be with Me on Shabbat and holidays. Holy days of You and me. Come greet Me in My Home, the Temple. I Will be with you; you be with Me.



7TH ALIYA (34:27-35)

Moshe was in the mountain 40 days, writing the second set of the 10 commandments. As he descended with the tablets, his face shone. The people were afraid of him. Moshe instructed them in all that G-d spoke with him on the mountain. Moshe covered his face when he was with the people, uncovering it when G-d spoke with him.

This most intense of parshas ends with an even more sublime image. Moshe's face is shining. The people are afraid. Just like at Sinai. We want to hear His Voice. But it is overwhelming. Here too. Moshe shines with the intensity of his encounter with G-d. But needing to cover it, for as much as we want the Divine, the encounter is overwhelming.

STATS

HAFTORAH PARSHAT PARAH
YEchezkel 36:16-36

21st of 54 sedras; 9th of 11 in Shemot. Written on 245.17 lines in a Torah (8th).

14 Parshiot; 10 open, 4 closed.

139 pesukim (10th), 1st in Shemot.

2002 words (5th), 1st in Shemot.

7424 letters (8th), 1st in Shemot.

Large sedra in general plus relatively long pesukim, which explains the jump in rank from 10th for pesukim to 5th for words. Only 4 other sedra have more than 2000 words.

This week we read a special *haftorah* which follows the theme of this week's additional Torah portion of *Parshat Parah* which speaks of the power of the 'Red Heifer' to purify.

We find in the *haftorah* the mention of "purifying waters" that are sprinkled upon the people of Israel with the coming of the Mashiach.

Hashem will take the people of Israel out of exile, not necessarily as a response to their meritorious deeds or acts of *teshuvah*, but as a result of Hashem's commitment to return them to their borders. Hashem will bring the Israelites back to the Holy Land and purify them with the waters of the Red Heifer. The people of Israel will then feel ashamed of their misdeeds and this reality will bring about a process of purification. Hashem will bestow prosperity and bounty upon the Land.

The following passage is one of the most memorable in the *haftorah* which describes an elevated and comforting vision of Eretz Yisrael: "This Land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden, and the cities that were destroyed and desolate and pulled down have become settled as fortified cities." ■

MITZVOT

9 mitzvot; 4 positives, 5 prohibitions
9 doesn't seem like very many mitzvot, but only 17 of the other 53 sedras (less than a third) have more mitzvot.

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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

“Don’t Take Down the Sign!”

Times were very different then. When one of our books was torn, we didn’t junk it. We took it to a little shop where a bookbinder rebound it.

When our briefcase (we didn’t have backpacks then) was falling apart, we didn’t discard it. Instead, we took it to that same shop where the proprietor stitched it and fixed it.

The proprietor of the shop that my friends and I frequented, down on the Lower East side of Manhattan, was an old man named Yossel.

Looking back, I now realize that Yossel, who was arthritic physically and far from genial emotionally, was a Holocaust survivor who eked out a meager livelihood by binding books, fixing broken zippers, and repairing all sorts of everyday tools and trinkets.

I remember once bringing some books to Yossel for rebinding and finding that the shop was closed. There was no sign on the door indicating that he was out to lunch, or that he had gone to pray, or when he would return.

So I came back to Yossel’s shop several times that week, and then but occasionally for the next two or three months. His sign, advertising his services, was still suspended over his doorway. I had every reason to assume that he would eventually reopen.

Finally, one day I approached his shop, and saw that the sign over his door was taken down. Now I knew that Yossel was out of

business.

This experience, hardly significant in its own right, took on a very profound meaning for me when I first heard an explanation, given by the great sage known as the Chofetz Chaim, of why the Torah calls the Sabbath a sign in this week’s portion, *Ki Tisa*.

“The people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath... It shall be a sign for all time between Me and the people of Israel...” (*Exodus 31:16-17*)

The Chofetz Chaim explained that the Sabbath is like a sign on a shopkeeper’s door. However far a Jew might stray, he is still connected to the Jewish people as long as he keeps the Sabbath in some manner. As long as there is a sign on the shopkeeper’s door, he may one day return and reopen for business. But once the sign is removed, once Sabbath observance is totally abandoned, then even that tenuous connection is severed.

It occurs to me that just as there are all sorts of signs, and Yossel’s makeshift shabby sign was certainly very different from signs on more luxurious stores, so too do Jews differ in the way in which they observe the Sabbath.

There are those who focus on every *halachah* involved in Sabbath observance. They are punctilious in following every rule contained in our code of laws.

There are others whose observance is a more spiritual one. They may keep the basic

Sabbath laws in some fashion but find the joy of the Sabbath more personally rewarding. They enjoy the festive meals, and they heartily sing the Sabbath songs.

Still, others take delight in intellectual indulgences in celebration of the Sabbath. They study, they read, they converse, they teach.

Then there are those of a more mystical bent who use the Sabbath for introspection, meditation, and contemplation, and maybe even as an occasion to delve into the classics of Jewish mysticism.

For some the Sabbath is something entirely different. It is merely a day of rest, a physical respite from the toil and stress of a busy week.

Whatever your Sabbath is like, dear reader, as long as it is a special day for you in some way, the sign of Sabbath is suspended over your door. You are, at least potentially, a Sabbath observer, and that is a sign of your connection to God and to the Jewish people.

But there is a lesson here for all of us: None of us can say that our Sabbath observance is a perfect one. None of us is innocent of some minor halachic infraction. Certainly, none of us can say that our Sabbath is one of pure and untainted spirituality. We all have “a way to go”.

Yet the vast majority of Jews whom I know, of whatever level of observance or denominational persuasion, have the sign of Sabbath on their shop door, in some manner or another.

As long as that sign hangs suspended over our doorway, we can confidently look forward to that day when each of us will celebrate a Sabbath worthy of the ultimate redemption of which our sages assure us. For they have said the *geulah*, the final redemption of our people, will come about when we fully observe two Sabbaths in succession.

Don't take down the sign! ■



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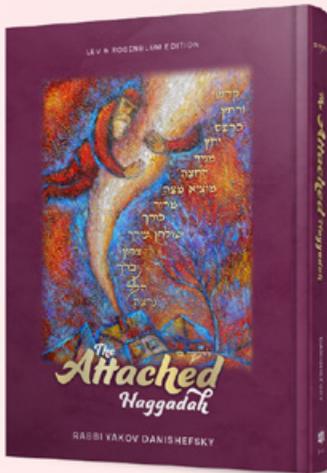
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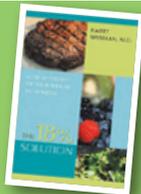
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THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

FORMER CHIEF RABBI OF THE UNITED HEBREW
CONGREGATIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

לעילוי נשמת

HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Arie'el zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

נחם בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד אייזע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שטרטער"ה

Two Types of Religious Encounter

Framing the epic events of this week's sedra are two objects – the two sets of Tablets, the first given before, the second after, the sin of the Golden Calf. Of the first, we read:

The Tablets were the work of God, and the writing was God's writing, engraved on the Tablets. (Ex. 32:16)

These were perhaps the holiest objects in history: from beginning to end, the work of God. Yet within hours they lay shattered, broken by Moses when he saw the Calf, and the Israelites dancing around it.

The second Tablets, brought down by Moses on the tenth of Tishri, were the result of his prolonged plea to God to forgive the people. This is the historic event that lies behind Yom Kippur (which falls each year on the tenth of Tishri), the day marked in perpetuity as a time of favour, forgiveness, and reconciliation between God and the Jewish people. The second Tablets were different from the first in one respect. They were not wholly the work of God:

"Carve two Tablets of stone like the first, and I will inscribe on them the Words that were on the first Tablets that you broke." (Ex. 34:1)

Hence the paradox: the first Tablets, made by God, did not remain intact. The second Tablets, the joint work of God and Moses, did. Surely the opposite should have been true: the greater the holiness, the more eternal. Why was the more holy object broken while the less holy stayed whole? This is not, as it might seem, a question specific to the Tablets. It is, in fact, a powerful example of a fundamental principle in Jewish spirituality.

The Jewish mystics distinguished between two types of Divine-human encounter. They called them *itaruta de-l'eylah* and *itaruta deletata*, respectively "an awakening from above" and "an awakening from below." The first is initiated by God, the second by humankind. An "awakening from above" is spectacular, supernatural, an event that bursts through the chains of causality that at other times bind the natural world. An "awakening from below" has no such grandeur. It is a gesture that is human, all too human.

Yet there is another difference between them, in the opposite direction. An "awakening from above" may change nature, but it does not, in and of itself, change human nature. In it, no human effort has been

expended. Those to whom it happens are passive. While it lasts, it is overwhelming; but only while it lasts. Thereafter, people revert to what they were. An “awakening from below”, by contrast, leaves a permanent mark.

Because human beings have taken the initiative, something in them changes. Their horizons of possibility have been expanded. They now know they are capable of great things, and because they did so once, they are aware that they can do so again. An awakening from above temporarily transforms the external world; an awakening from below permanently transforms our internal world. The first changes the universe; the second changes us.

Two examples. The first: Before and after the division of the Red Sea, the Israelites were confronted by enemies: before, by the Egyptians, after by the Amalekites. The difference is total.

Before the Red Sea, the Israelites were commanded to do nothing:

“Fear not. Stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you. You stay silent.” (Shemot 14:13-14)

Facing the Amalekites, however, the Israelites themselves had to fight:

Moses said to Joshua, *“Choose men for us, and go out and do battle with the Amalekites.”* (Shemot 17:9)

The first was an “awakening from above”, the second an “awakening from below.” The difference was palpable. Within three days after the division of the Sea, the greatest of all miracles, the Israelites began complaining again (no water, no food). But after the war against the Amalekites, the Israelites never again complained when facing conflict (the



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sole exception – when the spies returned and the people lost heart – was when they relied on hearsay testimony, not on the immediate prospect of battle itself). The battles fought for us do not change us; the battles we fight, do.

The second example: Mount Sinai and the Tabernacle. The Torah speaks about these two revelations of “God’s glory” in almost identical terms:

The glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the Cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day, He called to Moses from within the Cloud. (Ex. 24:16)

Then the Cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. (Ex. 40:34)

The difference between them was that the sanctity of Mount Sinai was momentary, while that of the Tabernacle was permanent (at least, until the Temple was built, centuries later).

The revelation at Sinai was an “awakening from above”. It was initiated by God. So overwhelming was it that the people said to Moses, “*Let not God say any more to us, or we will die*” (Ex. 20:16). By contrast, the Tabernacle involved human labour. The Israelites made it; they prepared the structured space the Divine Presence would eventually fill. Forty days after the revelation at Sinai, the Israelites made a Golden Calf. But after constructing the Sanctuary they made no more idols – at least until they entered the land. That is the difference between the things that are done for us and the things we have a share in doing ourselves. The former change us for a moment, the latter for a lifetime.

There is one further difference between the first Tablets and the second. According to tradition, when Moses was given the first Tablets, he was given only *Torah shebichtav*,

the “Written Torah”. At the time of the second Tablets, he was given *Torah she-be’al peh*, the Oral Torah as well:

R. Jochanan said: God made a covenant with Israel only for the sake of the Oral Law, as it says: “...*for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel*” (Ex. 34:27).

The difference between the Written and Oral Torah is profound. The first is the word of God, with no human contribution. The second is a partnership – the word of God as interpreted by the mind of man. The following are two of several remarkable passages to this effect:

R. Judah said in the name of Shmuel: Three thousand traditional laws were forgotten during the period of mourning for Moses. They said to Joshua: “Ask” (through *ruach ha-kodesh*, the Holy Spirit). Joshua replied, “It is not in heaven.” They said to Samuel, “Ask.” He replied, “These are the commandments,” implying that no prophet has the right to introduce anything new. (B.T. Temurah 16a) “If a thousand prophets of the stature of Elijah and Elisha were to give one interpretation of a verse, and one thousand-and-one Sages were to offer a different interpretation, we follow the majority: the law is in accordance with the thousand-and-one Sages and not in accordance with the thousand prophets.”

(Maimonides, Commentary to the Mishneh, Introduction)

Any attempt to reduce the Oral Torah to the Written – by relying on prophecy or Divine communication – mistakes its essential nature as the collaborative partnership between God and man, where revelation meets interpretation. Thus, the difference between the two precisely mirrors that between the first and second Tablets. The first were Divine, the

second the result of Divine-human collaboration. This helps us understand a glorious ambiguity. The Torah says that at Sinai the Israelites heard a “great voice *velo yasaf*” (Deut. 5:18). Two contradictory interpretations are given of this phrase. One reads it as “a great voice that was never heard again”, the other as “a great voice that did not cease” – i.e. a voice that was always heard again. Both are true. The first refers to the Written Torah, given once and never to be repeated. The second applies to the Oral Torah, whose study has never ceased.

It also helps us understand why it was only after the second Tablets, not the first, that “when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two Tablets of Testimony in his hand, he was unaware that the skin of his face shone with light because he had been speaking with God” (Shemot 34:29). Receiving the first Tablets, Moses was passive. Therefore, nothing in him changed. For the second, he was active. He had a share in the making. He carved the stone on which the words were to be engraved. That is why he became a different person. His face shone.

In Judaism, the natural is greater than the supernatural in the sense that an “awakening from below” is more powerful in transforming us, and longer lasting in its effects, than is an “awakening from above.” That was why the second Tablets survived intact while the first did not. Divine intervention changes nature, but it is human initiative – our approach to God – that changes us. ■

These weekly teachings from **Rabbi Sacks zt”l** are part of his ‘Covenant & Conversation’ series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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PROBING THE PROPHETS

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It's Not Just About Purity

Chazal instituted the reading of “Parah Adumah” (Red Heifer) during the time that the Bet HaMikdash stood in Yerushalayim. It was during that time that we were obligated to bring the Korban Pesach (Paschal sacrifice) and, for that reason, our ancient scholars found it proper to institute this Maftir reading some weeks before Pesach. There, the Torah details the purification ritual, reminding the nation to retain a state of purity, thereby allowing them to partake in the mitzvah of Korban Pesach. Chazal saw it fitting, therefore, to have the thirty-sixth perek of Sefer Yechezkel read on each Shabbat Parah, as it too, focuses upon the purification ritual, albeit, one that will take place in the future.

Interestingly, Yechezkel tells us that the ritual that will be followed during the era of the Third Temple will reflect the ritual that is used to purify only those who were “infected” with the highest level of tum’ah, impurity. The ritual requiring sprinkling of the purifying waters is depicted in the Torah **only** in our maftir reading [B’Midbar 19: 1-20] where its use is limited **only** for those contaminated

with **tum’at met**, any direct association with the dead. The navi’s prophecy of such a procedure reflects a reality that, in the future, the entire nation would be regarded as having been defiled by the highest level of impurity!

But we would be mistaken were we to see the reading simply as the process of purification alone. Doing so, would have us ignore the most impactful section of the haftarah. For, in the second section of the Yechezkel’s prophecy, the navi describes the **impact** of this “purification process”. Consider the following prophecies:

- “...the nations shall know that I am Hashem...**as I will be sanctified through you**” [24]
- “I will gather you from the all the countries **and bring you to your land** [25]
- “...and **you will dwell in the land** that I gave to your ancestors...” [28]
- “And I will multiply the grain and **never decree a famine upon you**” [29-30]
- “...the day I purify you from your sins, **I shall resettle the cities and the ruins will be built up**” [33]
- “**The desolate land will be worked**...in the sight of all who pass by” [34]
- “And they will say: **The land that was once desolate has become like the Garden of Eden and the cities that were destroyed...have become settled and fortified’...!**” [35]
- “The nations who remain around you will know that **I, Hashem, have built up the ruins and planted the desolate...I, Hashem, have spoken-and I will**

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perform it!!!" [36]

No, my friends. Do not see this haftarah as a simple depiction of a procedure for purifying the impure of tomorrow. **NOT AT ALL!** Yechezkel's nevu'ah is more than an echo of past ritual... It is the reality of the future... **OUR** future in which we live today!!! It is for this reason that I urge you to listen to the haftarah as it is being chanted, carefully read its words as they are pronounced and ponder the prophetic message that it meant to share with us.

Perhaps, while considering the significance the prophet's cries you will imagine Yechezkel looking down upon our land and our people from on high and saying; "I told you! I told you so!

I certainly see just that! ■

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Cheftza and Gavra – Shattering and Carrying the Luchot

וַיַּחַר־אַף מֹשֶׁה וַיִּשְׁלֶךְ מִיָּדוֹ אֶת־הַלְחֹת וַיִּשְׁבֵּר אֹתָם תַּחַת הַהָר

Moses became angry. He hurled the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain. (Shemot 32:19)

Parashat Ki Tisa recounts one of the most dramatic moments in the Torah: Moshe Rabbeinu descending from Har Sinai and shattering the Luchot. Yet Chazal offer seemingly contradictory descriptions of this act. Was the breaking of the Luchot a deliberate decision, or an event beyond Moshe's control?

YASHER KOCHACHA SHE'SHIBARTA – INTENTIONAL SHATTERING

At the very end of the Torah, Rashi (See also- Bava Batra 14a) comments on Moshe's greatness and notes that Hashem *congratulated* Moshe for breaking the Luchot:

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“וַיִּשְׂרַח כְּחָךְ שֶׁשִּׁבַּרְתָּ”- *well done for shattering them.* Moshe reasoned that after the grievous sin of the Golden Calf, Am Yisrael was no longer worthy of receiving the Luchot. The act was not one of rage alone, but of profound responsibility.

This, Rashi explains, is the meaning of the Torah's final words describing Moshe's deeds as being performed “לעיני כל ישראל”- before the eyes of all Israel. Moshe's leadership was defined not only by transmission, but also by restraint: knowing when *not* to give.

WHEN THE WORDS FLEW HEAVENWARD

Yet a strikingly different portrayal appears in the *Yalkut Shimoni* (Ki Tisa §393):

נסתכל משה בלוחות וראה הכתב שבהן שפורח... וכבדו על ידי משה ונפלו מידי ונשתברו

Moshe looked at the Luchot and saw the letters flying heavenward. The tablets suddenly became heavy in his hands; he lost his grip, and they fell and shattered.

According to this midrash, Moshe did not *decide* to break the Luchot. Rather, once the spiritual content of the divine letters departed, the tablets were transformed into an unbearable burden. The breaking appears almost accidental, as if it was a consequence of spiritual loss.

How are we to reconcile these two

depictions? Was Moshe praised for a bold act of leadership or overwhelmed by forces beyond his control?

CARRYING THE SECOND LUCHOT

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik offers a remarkable interpretation (cited in *Masoret HaRav*; see also *Birkat Yitzhak*) that reframes the entire episode. After Hashem forgives Bnei Yisrael, Moshe is commanded to carve and bring a second set of tablets:

וַיִּפְסַל שְׁנֵי לַחֹת אֲבָנִים כְּרֵאשֹׁנִים וַיִּשְׁכֶּם מֹשֶׁה
בְּבֹקֶר וַיַּעַל אֶל־הַר סִינַי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֹתוֹ וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ
שְׁנֵי לַחֹת אֲבָנִים:

He carved two tablets of stone like the first ones. Moshe rose early in the morning and ascended Mount Sinai as God had commanded him, and he took the two stone tablets in his hand. (Shemot 34:4)

We are told that Moshe ascended the mountain with a new set of Luchot ready for inscription. This description is astonishing. If Moshe could not *carry* the first Luchot down the mountain, how could he now ascend the mountain carrying an equivalent, if not greater weight? From a purely physical perspective, this should have been even more difficult.

The Rav explains this through the Brisker distinction between **cheftza** and **gavra**. A *cheftza* is an object - acted upon by external forces. A *gavra* is a subject - an active agent who acts with purpose and direction.

When Moshe descended the mountain upon hearing of the Golden Calf, he was shattered. Disappointed, heartbroken, and disoriented, he was pulled downward by despair. In that moment, Moshe became almost a *cheftza*, overwhelmed, acted upon, unable to carry the burden placed upon him.

However, when Hashem invited Moshe to ascend once more and to participate in



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the giving of a second chance, everything changed. Moshe was once again a *gavra*: purposeful, energized, and mission-driven. The same weight that had crushed him before now became viable to be carried. Not because the load was lighter, but because Moshe himself was spiritually stronger.

BECOMING A GAVRA

Life often places us in situations where the weight feels unbearable. Disappointment, failure, and loss can drain us of agency, leaving us feeling passive. We feel pushed and pulled by circumstances beyond our control. In those moments, we resemble the first Moshe descending the mountain: burdened not only by stone, but by despair.

Yet the Torah reminds us that this is not our permanent state. When we reconnect to purpose and recognize that we are still invited to climb, to build, and to begin again, we recover our identity as a *gavra*. The very same challenges that once felt crushing can now be lifted and carried.

The second Luchot teach us that *second chances are heavier, but holier*. They demand effort, carving, and ascent, but they are also the tablets that endure. Our task, then, is not merely to survive the weight of life, but to choose how we carry it. To transform ourselves from objects acted upon into agents of meaning, growth, and hope. ■



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“Ach et *shabtotai* tishmoru ki ot hi beini u’beineichem le’doroteichem lada’at ki ani Hashem mekadishchem — Only keep My **Sabbaths!** For it is a sign [of distinction] between Me and you for your generations, to know that I, Hashem, make you holy.” (*Shemot 31:13*) The commentators find this language surprising, as there is only one day of Shabbat each week; it therefore should have been written in the singular form, not the plural! How can we understand this in a way that is relevant and meaningful?

The simple interpretation is that of the *Ramban*. This verse refers to the entire year, during which we celebrate many *Shabbatot*. The *Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh* notes that it includes all occasions that we call Shabbat, like Yom Kippur and the festivals in general. We must guard all of these holy times with care.

The *Beit Halevi al haTorah* develops this

idea, and notes that the Torah offers two perspectives within its mandate to keep Shabbat. One aspect is to recall that Hashem created the world in six days, and rested on the seventh, investing the day with an elevated holiness. The other aspect is to recall the exodus from Egypt, which established us as Hashem’s chosen nation, investing within us a singular *kedushah*. This is the aspect alluded to in our verse — Shabbat is a sign of distinction between Hashem and us, His people. Shabbat is a reminder to all of us that we are a unique nation and we have a special relationship with Hashem. The festivals are also reminders of the Exodus and, as a result, of our special *kedushah* as well. Therefore, the word “*Shabbatot*” in our verse includes both Shabbat and the festivals as they share this common theme.

The *Netivot Shalom* shares a fascinating insight based on the distinctions between these two beliefs. In the Shabbat kiddush and *tefilot* we use the expression, “*yom hashevi’i*” to signify the aspect of creation, as in the first paragraph of the Friday night kiddush, “*Vayachulu hashamayim ve’ha’aretz vechol tzeva’am veyechal Elokim bayom hashevi’i melachto asher asa* — Now the heavens and the earth were completed and all their host. And G-d completed on **the seventh day** His work that He did.” (*Bereisheet 2:1-2*) However, when referring to the special relationship we have with Hashem beginning from the Exodus, we employ the term “Shabbat,” as in the second paragraph of kiddush, “*ki banu bacharta ve’otanu kidashta mi’kol ha’amim ve’Shabbat*

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kadshecha be'avahavah u'veratzon hinchaltanu — for you chose us and sanctified us from all the nations and Your holy Shabbat with love and pleasure You bequeathed to us..." Similarly, the Friday night *tefilot* repeatedly use the term "*yom hashevi'i*" but the daytime *tefilot* are replete with the word "Shabbat." "*Yom hashevi'i*" is the universal aspect of Shabbat, while "Shabbat" is the particularistic aspect, reflecting our special relationship with Hashem.

The *Ketav V'Hakablah* offers yet another explanation, noting that Shabbat is written in the plural since each Shabbat contains two distinct elements. Shabbat is a time of rest, a cessation of physical work, and allows us time to rest internally and focus on our spiritual growth and connection; the physical pause giving us the space to do the spiritual work.

Rav Pincus *zt"l* offers a powerful *mashal* to help us relate to this aspect of Shabbat Kodesh in a very real way. Imagine a newly married couple in the first moments after the *chuppah*, standing together in the *cheder yichud*. The chatan turns to his new bride and says, "Dear kallah, I haven't checked the stock market or box scores today, give me a few minutes to see what's going on and then I'll spend time with you." We would all agree that this would be highly inappropriate, a gross interference with the couple's anticipated intimacy and closeness, and ultimately with their relationship. Shabbat Kodesh is our opportunity to intimately connect with the Divine. If we can see it thus, Shabbat will indeed be the expression of our unique relationship with Hashem. ■

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This *Shabbat* we will read *Parshat Parah*, the third of the four special *parshiot* which surround the days of *Purim* and *Pesach*.

Parshat Parah comprises the opening verses of *Parshat Chukat* which introduce us to the mystical elixir for impurity, the mysterious inexplicable concept of the *para aduma* -the red heifer.

The Chasidic Masters saw in these *pesukim* not only the *halachic* remedy to purify those who have become ritually impure, but also an eternal message regarding the relationship between the Jewish People and the *Torah Hakedosha*.

One of the perplexing aspects of the *Para Aduma* ritual, is that the *Kohanim* who were involved in preparing the ashes of the *para aduma* became *tamei*-impure through the process. In preparing the mystical compound which would return others to purity, they in turn became *tamei*.

The *Avodat Elazar of Koshnitz zy'a*, offers an original interpretation to explain the hidden significance of this peculiar phenomenon based on the opening verse - *Zot Chukat*

HaTorah - This is the inexplicable principle of the *Torah*.

Our verse not only describes the mysterious nature of the *para aduma*, but also teaches us a very fundamental idea about *Torah* itself. Like any remedy, when channeled appropriately it can transform and cure and bring complete healing, or if *chas v'shalom* it is misused, taken out of context and applied inappropriately then it can bring further deficiency and harm.

The **Admor, Reb Dovid of Tolna zy'a**, clarifies this important idea further:

Why does the verse state this is the inexplicable principle of the Torah? What is the connection or parallel to be drawn between the para aduma and the entire Torah? Just as the para aduma has the capacity to both purify and render impure, so too the Torah can either be a source of ultimate purity, or chas v'shalom, the opposite. One whose scholarship and knowledge of Torah leads to haughtiness, rather than humility and refined character, is one who has become spiritual deficient.

The **Netivot Shalom, the Admor of Slonim zy'a** offers a different interpretation of our verse *Zot Chukat HaTorah*. Our verse, explains the Rebbe, is not only introducing us to the *para aduma* as a vehicle to restore purity, but also an eternal message which applies even now in the absence of the *Beit HaMikdash* and of the *para aduma*. **Zot Chukat HaTorah**- In our current state, without the *Beit HaMikdash* and with no *para aduma*, the vehicle for we Jews to experience some form of a return to purity is by immersing ourselves in the study of *Torah - Zot Chukat HaTorah!*

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The *Bat Ayin, the Rebbe of Avrich zy'a*, similarly points out that the *para aduma* is on some level meant to be a *tikkun* (fixing/correction) for the impurity introduced into the world through the *Cheit HaEgel* (The Sin of the Golden Calf).

The Rebbe taught:

Our Master, the Toldot Yaakov Yosef, zy'a, wrote that Cheit HaEgel impacted future generations, and that the word egel is an acronym for the words arayot (illicit behavior), gezel (theft) and lashon hara (inappropriate speech).

So too, the tikkun for all of these, as represented by the para aduma, also comprises an acronym for the word egel - Avoda, Gemilut chasadim and Limud Torah...

The *Bat Ayin* taught that the *para aduma* not only provided a metaphysical healing for those who had come into contact with impurity, but also came to teach us how to overcome the impact that resulted from the *Cheit HaEgel*.

Yehi Ratzon, as we begin over these next few weeks to prepare ourselves spiritually and emotionally for the incredible *yom tov* of *Pesach*, may we merit that our *limud Torah* should indeed bring purity to our minds and hearts, and that we soon merit to experience this year to partake of the *korban Pesach* in purity, to experience the building of the *Beit HaMikdash*, and the return of all its associated sacred and wondrous rituals. ■

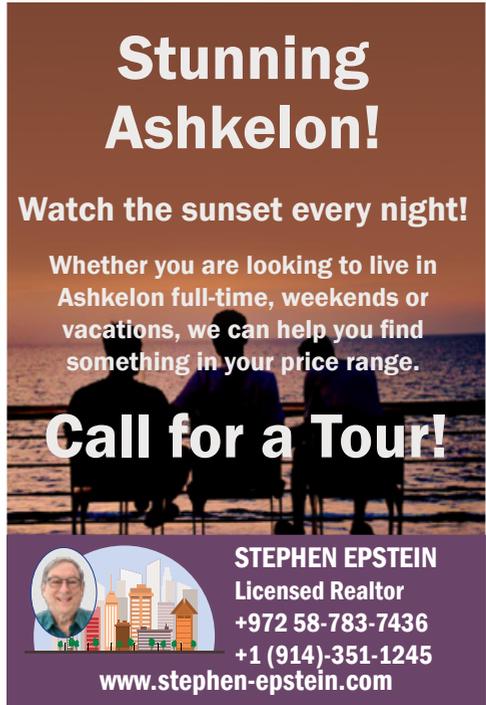


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A story was related by Rebbe Avraham Yaakov of Sadigora zy'a, the son of the Rebbe Yisrael of Rhizin:

One *Erev Shabbos*, Rebbe Yisrael the holy Baal Shem Tov zy'a appeared in a shtetl unexpectedly. Locals were thrilled to be graced by the presence of the Tzadik, though the Baal Shem Tov declined all invitations for Shabbos and asked to be left alone in the *shteibl*. Throughout the night the Baal Shem Tov remained in shul, davening and reciting Tehillim fervently, without pause. Surely something was wrong! In the morning, the villagers' concerns were allayed when the Baal Shem Tov seemed content and joyous, and accepted the *gabbai's* invitation for the daytime *Shabbos seudah*.

In the course of the meal, they were interrupted by a drunken peasant knocking on doors looking for some vodka. The *gabbai* was about to drive him away, but the Baal Shem Tov asked that he be welcomed. The Tzadik sat him down, poured a large shot of *mashkeh* and asked the gentile visitor to relate what he'd experienced the night before.

The peasant described being summoned with his friends to the estate of the local *poritz*, who was planning a pogrom against the Jewish

community. The locals didn't need much convincing, and were ready at a moment's notice to set out on a murderous rampage:

"We waited all night at the estate for the final go-ahead... but soon after gathering us, the Poritz was called into an important meeting and abruptly locked himself in his office with an unexpected visitor, an old associate that he hadn't seen for nearly forty years! After waiting there for hours, he finally emerged and strangely told us all to go home, and that anyone who raises their hand against the Jews would be punished severely."

This "unexpected visitor", explained the Sadigura Rebbe, "had been dead for years... and was dragged from the grave by the holy Baal Shem Tov's prayers to intervene on behalf of Klal Yisrael in front of his old friend, the Poritz.

"You might wonder why the Baal Shem Tov had to travel all the way to that shtetl for Shabbos in order to avert the *gezeirah* decree," continued the Rebbe. "Couldn't he have just remained in Medzibuz and davened from his own *beis medrash*?"

Said the Rebbe, "The Baal Shem Tov's intent in going to the village was clear: *Halevai* I will succeed in saving the town with my prayers... but if not, then let my fate be together with them!"

Our sedra describes the painful episode of the *Eigel HaZahav*, the Golden Calf, that transpires when Moshe Rabbeinu does not descend from Har Sinai when expected. Impatient, the people create an idol. Seeing them

 **Mazal Tov to** 
Leah & Dr. Dahvid Wolf and
family on the birth of a grandson

celebrating, Moshe Rabbeinu drops the hewn tablets of the *Aseres HaDibros*, shattering the holy stones.

When Hashem proposes to destroy the nation and begin a new history starting with Moshe, Moshe refuses. Our *Rayah Mehemnah*, the Faithful Shepherd, protests, and rises up in our defense: “If You do not forgive them, *macheini na m’sifrecha*, “Blot me out of the book that You have written!”

Moshe’s intent resounds: “Let my fate be together with them!” Indeed, Our Teacher is ready to give up all of his accomplishments, his legacy and place in history — for us. But he is not a mere ‘captain going down with the ship’. Moshe Rabbeinu stands up and ‘fights’ for us with *Azus deKedushah*, holy brazenness. And he models what it means to be a leader: ready to perform *mesirus nefesh*, self-sacrifice for his people. Not only does he save Am Yisrael, he triggers the revelation of the 13 Attributes of Divine Mercy, paving a way for Tikun and salvation for all generations. He places these Attributes in our hands, as the treasures of our Selichos liturgy.

Our sedra provides us an opportunity to consider:

- In our day to day lives, how do we sacrifice for the wellbeing of others?
- How can I more deeply commit myself to Klal Yisrael and all of humanity?
- To what extent are we willing to receive Moshe’s teaching and give up everything in the service of our People?

From Moshe Rabbeinu and the Baal Shem Tov, our mandate is clear: we must do all that we can on behalf of Klal Yisrael. Our fates *are* inextricably bound up with our brothers and sisters. May we all be blessed with good health, and experience revealed good in every way! ■

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OU ISRAEL 39

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MAR 8**

7:30 PM

Men's Safrut (The Bais)
Rabbi Tzvi Mauner
7 Hartum Street,
2nd Floor

SPECIAL EVENT:

7:00 PM

Bat Mitzvah Program
in the Old City

**MONDAY
MAR 9**

8:30 PM

The Bais (for Men)
Semichat Chaver Program
Rav Elyada Goldwicht
@ **Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak**
Keren Hayesod St.

*The schedule is subject to change



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February 23 *Carmei Gat* 20:00

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March 5 *Pardes Hana* 19:00

March 8 *Chashmonaim* 19:00

March 9 *Modiin* 19:00

March 11 *RBS* 19:30

March 12 *Givot Eden* 19:30

March 15 *Tel Mond* 19:30

March 17 *Yerushalayim* 19:30

March 18 *Givat Shmuel* 19:30

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**TUESDAY
MAR 10**

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9:20 AM

Understanding Tefila

Rabbi Yossi Goldin

11:25 AM

P'shat in the Parsha

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

10:15 AM

Rambam: Letters & Introductions

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

12:20 PM

Unlocking the Messages of Chazal

Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

TORAH TUESDAYS WITH THE WOMEN'S DIVISION

Classes @ Beit Kneset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St. Rechavia

9:15AM

Torah Tapestries with

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Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

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7:30 PM Men's Safrut in **BEIT SHEMESH** Rabbi Elie Levi

This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with OU Israel

**WEDNESDAY
MAR 11**

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN RECHAVIA

@ Bet Kneset HaNassi,
24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia

9:15AM

Holy Poetry **Rabbi Dr. Aharon Adler**

10:20AM

From Table to Tachlis:
Halacha in Action
Rabbi Jeremy Perlow

11:25 AM

Mussar and Self Improvement:
A study of Rav Kook's sefer
Midot HaRayah
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

12:30 PM

Jews in the Middle Ages:
External Threats and Internal
Developments **Dr. Deborah Polster**

SPECIAL EVENT:

Women's Sefer Yehoshua
Tiyul to Mitzpe Yericho

**THURSDAY
MAR 12**

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

@ Bet Kneset Shai Agnon,
11 Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

9:15 AM

Parshat HaShavua **Rabbi Ari Kahn**

10:30AM

Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Baruch Taub

11:25 AM

Trailblazing the Text of Tanach
Rabbi Neil Winkler

12:20 AM

Modern Masters **Rabbi Sam Shor**

BET KNESSET OHEL YITZCHAK

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8:00 PM

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Words of Introduction



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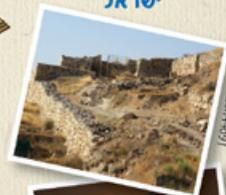
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Words of Introduction



VIA KIMCHE
Our Pesach Story



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Musical Hallel by
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Salt, Kosher, and Shabbat – Part Two

Last week, we discussed the topic of kosher salt and cooking on Shabbat. As mentioned earlier, kosher certification agencies often provide valuable insight into various halachic areas of Torah. This includes subjects like *Hilchot Shabbat* (the laws of Shabbat) and selling *chametz* on Pesach. These agencies can offer guidance on complex halachic questions.

Although it's clear that salt in Israel is generally considered cooked, it's important to understand the underlying principles so we can apply them to different scenarios of *bishul* (cooking) on Shabbat.

THE SOURCE

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 42:b) presents two opinions regarding cooking salt on Shabbat. Generally, uncooked food cannot be added to a *kli rishon* (the primary utensil used for cooking, typically a pot or pan), even after it has been removed from the fire. However, one opinion states that salt is an exception. Due to its nature, salt doesn't truly cook unless added to a pot that is still on the fire. Therefore, the prohibition only applies in that specific case. It is, however, permitted to add salt to a pot that has already been removed from the fire.

The second opinion holds that salt cooks relatively easily and should not be added even to a *kli sheini* (a secondary dish that holds hot food poured from the *kli rishon*).

The *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 318:9) follows the lenient position. Regarding those who follow the strict opinion, the *Rema* writes, "It is praiseworthy."

The *Mishnah Berurah* (318:71) adds that if the salt has been cooked during its production, even the stringent position would permit placing it in a *kli rishon* (once removed from the fire). This is based on the principle of *Ein Bishul Achar Bishul*—there is no prohibition of cooking something that has already been cooked, even if it cools down.

SALT IN ISRAEL

As previously mentioned, there are different methods of collecting salt, depending on geographic and economic factors. These methods include:

- **Mining:** A process that does not require heat.
- **Solar Evaporation:** This method uses the sun's heat, without additional artificial heat.
- **Solution Mining:** This process requires heat, but it is applied selectively.
- **Mechanical Compression:** This method does not require heat.

In Israel, the solar evaporation method is commonly used. After collecting the salt, it undergoes a final drying step to remove residual moisture, ensuring the final product has a moisture level below 0.1%. The drying process takes place in an oven heated to about



200-300°F for approximately ten minutes.

BISHUL ACHAR AFIAH

Rav Schachter has noted that it is questionable whether the baking process used for salt qualifies as an *Afiyah* (baking). However, the only reason the *Rema* is stringent about forbidding salt in a *kli sheini* (or in a *kli rishon* that is not on the fire) is based on the opinion that salt is a *Kalei Habishul* (easily cooked), which means it cooks even with minimal heat. If salt is indeed *Kalei Habishul*, then it stands to reason that ten minutes in a hot oven would also be sufficient to cook the salt.

Therefore, according to Rav Schachter, one may place salt into a *kli rishon* that has been removed from the fire, or into a *kli sheini*, based on the lenient opinion (as cited by the *Shulchan Aruch*). According to the strict opinion, the salt is already considered cooked.

It would be forbidden to place salt into a *kli rishon* that is still on the fire, as the reasoning for allowing salt to be placed in a *kli rishon* (removed from the fire) does not apply, and there are other *Hilchot Shabbat* concerns.

Rav Belsky assumed that the ten-minute baking process does qualify as an *Afiyah*. As mentioned, the *Shulchan Aruch* cites two opinions about whether it is forbidden to cook something that has already been baked. Generally, we are stringent about this because it involves a biblical prohibition. However, for the case of placing salt into a *kli rishon* (removed from the fire) or into a *kli sheini*, we are not required to be stringent, as cooking salt in these pots is considered no more than a stringency (*hamachmir tovoh*

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alav bracha, as the *Rema* writes).

This reasoning does not permit placing salt into a *kli rishon* that is on the fire.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, both Rav Schachter and Rav Belsky agree that one may place salt into a *kli rishon* (once removed from the fire) or into a *kli sheini* on Shabbat. However, it is prohibited to place salt into a *kli rishon* that is still on the fire. ■

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Shabbat Without Heaven

Parashat Ki Tisa contains the fourth mention of Shabbat within a span of six parshiyot. No other halachah in the Torah appears with such frequency in so short a stretch.

SHABBAT GRADUALLY TAKES SHAPE

The first mention of Shabbat appears in the desert, as we journey toward Har Sinai—at the encampment of Marah and again at Alush. These two references, taken together, form the Torah's first sustained introduction of Shabbat observance. Before we arrive at Har Sinai, Shabbat has already begun to take shape along the journey.

The parsha of Yitro returns to Shabbat observance, presenting it as the mitzvah of Zachor, later reframed as Shamor on the second Luchot, and placed at the heart of the Aseret HaDibrot.

Subsequently, in Parshat Mishpatim, after an extended presentation of social and civil law, the Torah once again returns to Shabbat, embedding its laws within the fabric of

societal obligations. In Parshat Ki Tisa, Shabbat is mentioned for a fourth time.

SERENITY, FAMILY, COMMUNITY

In the desert encampments, Shabbat offered the chance to finally rest. Since leaving Egypt, our lives had been frenetic and unsettled, moving from place to place across an unforgiving landscape. First came the hurried flight from Egypt, then the crossing of the sea, followed by relentless travel. Shabbat allowed a release of tension and the return of calm to a people who had been living at full throttle for weeks on end.

In Yitro, within the Aseret HaDibrot, Shabbat is presented through the lens of family. The entire household—parents and children, servants and animals—comes to a halt together. Daily labor pauses, and the family regathers. For this reason, the mitzvah of Shabbat follows immediately after the commandment of kibbud av va'eim. Honoring parents strengthens the family structure; Shabbat observance then creates the time and space for that structure to be lived and experienced. It carves out family presence within an otherwise demanding workweek.

Shabbat in the early desert provided rest and serenity. Shabbat at Har Sinai promised renewed connection within the family.

In Mishpatim, a different angle of Shabbat emerges. The laws of Mishpatim provide the blueprint for building an ethical society.

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However, societies require more than a moral foundation in order to flourish. They also need a shared narrative and a common story. For this reason, at the conclusion of Mishpatim, the Torah turns to the chagim, moments that commemorate our collective story of being chosen. Shabbat is included here as well, anchoring that shared narrative in the belief in a single Creator who fashioned the world and rested on the seventh day.

In Mishpatim, Shabbat is embedded within a social framework. It fosters strong communities alongside strong families. The halachot of Shabbat require that guests remain for the duration of Shabbat, creating space not only for extended family presence but also for hospitality and generosity.

Up to this point, Shabbat has been presented as a day oriented toward human need. It provides a twenty-four-hour pause from labor, time for family bonding, and the space necessary for communal gathering and connection.

Is that all there is to Shabbat?

REST AND RETREAT

About ten years ago, an Orthodox woman published an article in the New York Times describing the beauty of an observant Shabbat. She portrayed a day spent at home with teenage daughters, lingering in sleepwear, unhurried and unpressured. Shabbat created space to catch up on busy lives, to play board

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games, and—perhaps most appealingly—to unplug for twenty-four hours. It was a warm and lovingly drawn picture of family life and relationship-building.

The article was elegantly written and clearly valuable for its intended audience, most of whom were not Jewish. It argued for the importance of a weekly pause in a society addicted to work and trapped in an endless cycle of pressure. Charlie Kirk makes a similar case in his book *Stop, in the Name of God*, presenting Shabbat as a corrective to modern exhaustion.

SHABBAT WITHOUT HEAVEN

Yet reading that New York Times piece, I found myself asking: How did Shabbat lose its sense of transcendence?

Shabbat is also a day for Hashem—a day to suspend human mastery and remember Divine creation. It is a day to step back from the comforts and preoccupations of this world



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and to redirect time and attention toward larger spiritual pursuits. That dimension of Shabbat, its orientation toward Heaven rather than merely toward human well-being, was almost entirely absent from the portrait.

Ki Tisa restores this forgotten dimension of Shabbat. The Torah describes Shabbat as 'שבת שבתון קודש לה'. Rashi comments, 'שמי, רת קדושה לשמי ובמצותי', emphasizing that the day is to be dedicated to Hashem and to His mitzvot.

On this day, tefillah should be more deliberate and focused. Talmud Torah, often neglected during the week, should move to the center. Speech should be guarded more carefully. Shabbat is meant to feel otherworldly, marked by sanctity. To achieve that sense of otherworldliness, we must step back from immersion in this world.

Shabbat, however, is not meant to negate the physical. It is a balance. The mitzvah of oneg requires eating and enjoyment. Unlike Yom Tov, which is defined as a day of simcha, Shabbat is defined as a day of oneg. On Yom Tov, a person who experiences simcha through fasting may do so; on Shabbat, fasting is forbidden. Yet even the physical pleasure of Shabbat must be held in tension with transcendence, not allowed to eclipse it.

This is the added feature of Shabbat articulated in Ki Tisa. Shabbat is not only a day

of rest, family, and community. It is a day of transcendence—לשמי.

MODERN SHABBAT

Has modern Shabbat drifted too far from transcendence? Have we emphasized oneg at the expense of לשמי?

That concern is not abstract. Modern Shabbat has become remarkably comfortable. Our ancestors experienced Shabbat with limited light and heat. Much of their food—certainly the daytime meal—was cold. Without eiruvim, movement was restricted to a narrow physical space. Today, mechanization has transformed that experience. Shabbat clocks, heating systems, and air conditioning have rendered Shabbat nearly indistinguishable from the weekday. The sharp shutdown of human activity has largely faded.

As a result, it has become harder to experience 'שבת לה' in the way earlier generations once did. With the rise of self-driving vehicles, new questions will inevitably be raised about their use on Shabbat. If halachic travel on Shabbat ever becomes possible, the final barrier separating Shabbat from the weekday will have fallen.

Shabbat has become emulsified. Ki Tisa urges us to restore some of the balance. To use Shabbat for rest and for unplugging from a frantic, wired, and constantly connected world. To build deep and lasting family experiences, so necessary in an age of pressure, anxiety, and insecurity. To fashion robust communities shaped by shared values and mitzvot. But also to make Shabbat genuinely different, by reclaiming it as a more spiritually centered experience.

Many of the decisions we face—or are already in the process of making—about Shabbat will turn on this tension. Particular activities and experiences may be halachically

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permissible. Yet at what point do they further emulsify Shabbat by layering on additional pleasure and convenience? Can too much oneg shabbat deplete and dilute shabbat of its purpose? Will Shabbat become too enjoyable and too worldly?

What is lost if Shabbat is stripped of its remaining transcendence? Will we lose Shabbat La'Hashem? ■



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A Sensitive Soul's Anger (Midot HaRa'aya, Ka'as)

In general, when the Mussar works speak of anger, the emphasis is on how a Jew must quash such feelings and be extremely wary not to be drawn into a scenario in which one might give in to this unsavory response of fury.

Rav Kook, in his unique way, addresses the trait of *ka'as* (anger/agitation) as a natural response that a sensitive soul may experience. Surely, Rav Kook is sharing a feeling that he himself encountered from time to time.

Rav Kook first describes the agitation a spiritually sensitive person feels when he or she is constricted by limitations—even within halacha—that are tethered to this worldly domain. The Jewish soul yearns to feel at one with the endless light of God. “Anger for the sake of the Torah arises when the person of higher

spiritual sensibility who soars in the realm of higher contemplation is forced to confront the narrow world of particularized teachings and precepts, which are imposed by necessity on the alluring heights of universality. And the higher soul is grieved, and thus is engendered irritation of spirit and anger for the sake of the Torah.” (Midot HaRa'aya, Ka'as (Anger))

THREE TIMES A DAY

The Talmud (Berachot 4a) states that one who recites the psalm of *Ashrei* three times daily is assured his reward in the World to Come. The uniqueness of this psalm and prayer, according to the Talmud, lies in the fact that it contains the aleph-bet in acrostic form and includes the verse, “God opens His hand and provides all creatures with their needs” (Psalm 145).

Rav Kook suggested that reciting the aleph-bet thrice daily exemplifies a Jew's yearning to reach the depths of a relationship with the Almighty. He quotes the teaching of the Zohar, which says that the universe was created with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In other words, the letters represent the building blocks and inner structure of all creation. A Jew yearns to know God—intimately, deeply—and to learn His inner secrets.

The second aspect regarding the importance of this psalm—that it contains the verse “God opens His hand...”—relates directly to the notion of a Jew's yearning to reach higher realms of understanding and closeness to the Creator. When a person is bogged down with the distractions and troubles of day-to-day life, one has little time or headspace for



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contemplation and meditation on deeper matters. However, when one develops an ongoing faith that God provides for all, and that Divine Providence oversees every aspect of life, one is able to direct heart and mind toward the loftiest goal of *Kirvat Elokim* (closeness to God). (Ain Aya, Berachot Chapter 1, piska #21, p. 12)

RAV KOOK'S ECSTATIC LOVE

Two remarkable episodes, reported by Rav Kook's close friend and confidant, Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop, highlight Rav Kook's elevated and almost otherworldly love for the Almighty.

In 1914, when Rav Charlop traveled with Rav Kook to the agricultural settlements of the Galilee, he witnessed Rav Kook's state of ecstasy:

"I was awakened in the middle of the night. I saw Rav Kook carried away as if by a tempest, pacing the length of the room, back and forth. I was frightened and uplifted at the same time.

Suddenly, the Rav approached me and took hold of me. His hands were cold as ice, while his face was aflame with fire. From his mouth burst forth words of passion: 'Rav Ya'akov Moshe, Ich ver farebrent fun ahava Hashem!'" ("Rabbi Yaakov Moshe, I am being burnt up by the love of God"). (Koren Rav Kook Siddur, Naor, p. 29, quoted from Sichot ha-Rayah, Neriyah, pp. 351–352)

On another occasion, Rav Charlop related this experience: "In the summer of 1921, Rav Kook went to rest in Har Tov. I visited him there, and our private conversation extended into the wee hours. The next morning, I noticed that the Rav did not arrive at prayer. What's more, totally out of character for the Rav (who was punctilious not to engage in any activity before prayer), I saw him approach



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the innkeeper and begin to discuss botanical matters with him. Only after concluding this conversation did he proceed to prayer.

The delay and the incongruous conversation made me wonder, and I plucked up the courage to ask the Rav to explain his curious behavior.

This was his response: "This morning there burned within me such a thirst for the Living God, I feared that in prayer my soul would be consumed. I was forced to dampen my



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enthusiasm by lowering my thoughts to practical, mundane matters.” (Koren Rav Kook Siddur, Naor, p. 28, cited from Rav Moshe Zvi Neriya, Orot Hatefilla, p. 19)

A SECOND KIND OF ANGER TO MITIGATE

Rav Kook describes a second kind of agitation or anger to which a spiritually sensitive person is vulnerable. When someone pursues a path of elevated contemplation and holy thought, yet sees many around him engaged in base and spiritually hollow pursuits, he may feel frustration and grief. “At times this [agitation] also develops because of a sudden confrontation with reality, which remains in its lowly state in the practical world, because life is on a low level of development.” (*Midot HaRa’aya, Ka’as* [Anger])

Rav Kook advises us how to overcome feelings of agitation and anger. One must faithfully perceive that “the descents are in truth ascents.” One needs to focus on potential benefits—the gains that can accrue even from certain deficiencies—and devoutly believe in the greater Divine plan. “The reflective person will understand how all the descents are in truth ascents, and that the particularizations and limitations bring into being a wide illumination of a higher divine light. Then will

a divine inner peace once again pervade the soul and one will find rest and contentment; ‘the light of the righteous brings joy’” (Proverbs 13:9).

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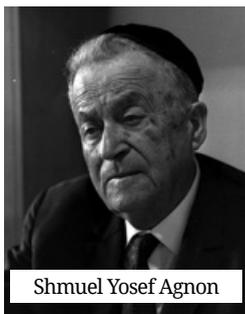
A powerful example of this approach is seen in Rav Kook’s interaction with the

culture outside the sacred confines of Torah study and mitzvah observance. The popularity of Hebrew literature that began to surface in the early 1900s in Palestine could easily have been a source of agitation for Rav Kook and his devotion to tradition. Yet Rav Kook perceived the potential to express Jewish ideals and inspirational teachings through these writings—reaching a broader spectrum of Jews who might not otherwise be drawn to traditional forms of Torah study.

An exceptional example of Rav Kook’s openness in this context was the relationship he forged with a young writer who had just arrived in Yaffo (1908), a few years after Rav Kook’s own arrival in 1904: Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1887–1970). Agnon would go on to become a Nobel laureate for his renowned writings.

When Agnon arrived in Yaffo, he had abandoned traditional observance. Rav Kook took early notice of him and asked to read his work. At that time, Agnon’s portfolio was relatively modest, and everything he had published could be read in several days. Yet Agnon hesitated. Some of the material touched on areas of romance, eros, and passion.

Rav Kook read all of Agnon’s writings. The following interaction then took place: “He told me he had read my work. I asked, ‘All of it?’ He replied, ‘All of it, and I will tell you something. The *Pri Megadim*... explains that if one quantity of forbidden food should fall into a volume of permitted food sixtyfold times as large, the forbidden becomes *batel*, and the permitted profits from the prohibited, since there are now sixty-one parts. That’s the way it is with you; even if there is something “forbidden” that has fallen into your books, it is *batel be-shishim*, canceled out and has become permitted.” (S.Y. Agnon, *Me’Atzmi el Atzmi*, p.



Shmuel Yosef Agnon

93, translated in *Tradition, A Portrait of Two Artists*, Saks, p. 36)

Rav Kook sought to identify the positive attributes and the potential good that could emerge from Agnon's writings. Surely, it was a struggle for Rav Kook to legitimize all of his writings—and those of other well-known authors publishing at that time. In a passage from *Orot HaTeshuva* (15:12), Rav Kook stresses the crucial need for authors of modern Hebrew literature to be personally devout and committed to mitzvot, so that their writing reflects the beauty and purity of Judaism:

“The recognition that a decline in the moral realm impedes a literary flowering is a uniquely Jewish sensitivity. Only we [Jews] truly recognize that, in order to rectify literature, [its] authors must first purify their souls” (*Orot HaTeshuva*, 15:12).

One clearly notes that Rav Kook felt strongly that only from a pure and committed soul could authentic and elevated writing emanate. Yet he was able to appreciate the contribution being made by those who had not yet reached that standard of religious devotion—and he hoped that by encouraging and supporting their journey, they would ultimately achieve this ideal. It should be duly noted that in the case of Shay Agnon, one should not underestimate the warm reception and personal friendship of Rav Kook, which played a pivotal role in Agnon's return to embrace Judaism and a committed life of halacha and tradition.

RAV ARYEH'S SELF-CONTROL

Yitzchak Zilberstein emigrated to Israel as a young boy in the 1930s and entered the elementary school of Aryeh Levin. He was soon taken under Rav Aryeh's warm and nurturing wing.

Rav Zilberstein, today one of the leading poskim in the world, harkens back to an

incident with Rav Aryeh Levin that impacted him for the rest of his life.

Rav Aryeh was often summoned to negotiate the release of Jews who were imprisoned by the British in the pre-state years of Palestine. On one such mission, Rav Aryeh brought along his young protégé, Yitzchak Zilberstein. Rav Zilberstein shared what he witnessed in his own words:

“Once I went with Rav Aryeh to negotiate with the British for the release of a member of the Neturei Karta,” recalls Rav Zilberstein. “It took us a great deal of time and effort to reach the prison, and once we were there, it took hours more to secure the release.

“But when the man walked free, he covered his eyes and refused to look at Rav Aryeh, saying, ‘It's forbidden to look at a rasha!’” (a reference to Rav Aryeh Levin's close relationship with Rav Kook zt"l).

“At that time,” recalls Rav Zilberstein, “it really hurt me, and I exclaimed to Rav Aryeh: ‘Does the obligation to love a fellow Jew extend so far?!’

“Incredibly, Rav Aryeh's response was one of surprise. He turned to me, looked me in the eye, and simply said: ‘But he is a Jew!’

“Rav Aryeh's gaze as he said those words accompanies me all the time,” concludes Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein. (*Sweetness and Light*, Mishpacha Magazine, Shulman and Gutentag, April 3, 2023)

“CHANGE YOUR BEKESHA BEFORE EXPRESSING YOUR ANGER”

There is a chassidic tale of a Rebbe who offered his chassidim practical advice on managing anger. When a person feels heated and agitated and senses the urge to express frustration, he should go to his closet and put on a second bekeshah set aside specifically for such moments.

The chassidim later shared their own explanation for their Rebbe's unusual counsel—based, perhaps, on experience. By the time they went upstairs, opened the closet, located the correct *bekesha*, changed garments, and came back downstairs, nearly all of their anger had dissipated. They were then able to discuss the matter in a level-headed way, without raising their voices or lashing out.

The Rebbe's advice proved to be the perfect remedy time and again.

LESSONS FOR LIFE

- Give some of your time to someone else. Try to listen to what they are saying—and what they are not saying—without immediately attempting to answer or solve their problems.
- Make sure that today you not only give people the benefit of the doubt, but even when it seems they are clearly wrong,

try to find some way of justifying their actions. Strive to see their point of view.

- The Sages praise the value of silence—which is often the best response when feeling a surge of anger rising. The Chafetz Chaim writes that when a person wishes to fast voluntarily, it is preferable to accept a fast from speaking (*ta'anit dibur*). (Shmirat HaLashon, Shaar HaTevunah chap. 2, in the note). ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at arong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

Mazal Tov to Ruth & Steve Younker on the engagement of their son

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Gluten-Free Diet and Shabbat Considerations

לעילוי נשמת
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: Some family members (including me) are gluten-intolerant, so we have two types of *challot* and cakes, with and without grain flour. Is the gluten-free type valid for: 1. Completing the *Kiddush* process; 2. *Lechem mishneh*; 3. Continuing *seuda shlishit* that began before sunset?

Answer:

1. **Kiddush** - The *gemara* (Pesachim 101a) teaches that we must make *Kiddush* in a place where a “meal” will follow. That discussion also refers to “tasting” after *Kiddush*, which implies less than a classic meal. Although some authorities require the tasting to include bread, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 273:5) rules that wine satisfies this requirement. The Magen Avraham (273:11) reasons that if wine qualifies, then foods made from one of the “five grains,” which are more meal-like, certainly suffice (OC 273:11). The Pri Megadim (ad loc.) extends this to dates, but most *poskim* disagree (see Yabia Omer VII, OC 35).

Based on the above, one who cannot eat from the “five grains” (many gluten-sensitive people can eat specially cultivated oats) should drink a *revi'it* of wine or grape juice (Mishna Berura 273:22). When this is not

feasible, two minority leniencies are sometimes cited: 1. In cases of need, any food can constitute a “*Kiddush* meal” (Chayei Adam II:6:22); 2. It suffices that one person involved in the *Kiddush* eat the requisite food/amount (see B'Tzel HaChochma IV:2). If relying on such positions, it is best to eat something filling/meal-like, which satisfies at least the “spirit of the law.”

2. **Lechem Mishneh** – Ordinarily, Shabbat meals require two loaves of bread made from halachic grain in a manner that requires *Birkat Hamazon* (Shulchan Aruch Harav, OC 274:5). However, a gluten-sensitive person should view himself as fulfilling the *mitzva* of *seuda* in the best way he can.

It is appropriate (not halachically required) for him to use two gluten-free loaves of “bread.” Treating non-five-grain foods as bread has limited halachic precedent. An *ei-ruv chatzeirot* requires “bread,” yet that bread may be made from rice or lentils (Shulchan Aruch, OC 366:8). Moreover, the requirement of two loaves is derived from the *mana*, which was not grain-based, but was still the bread of Israel. Similarly, rice or potato bread can arguably be considered bread for gluten-free dieters (Mishna Berura ad loc. 47). It is also positive to eat or drink something that will have a *beracha acharona* of *me'ein*

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shalosh, which enables him to parallel *Birkat HaMazon* and mention Shabbat.

3. **Seuda shlishit** – The *gemara* (Pesachim 105a) says that one who is eating as Shabbat enters must interrupt his eating to recite *Kiddush*. It suggests that similarly one who is eating as Shabbat ends would have to interrupt the meal for *Havdala*. However, the *gemara* concludes that *Havdala* does not interrupt eating, but only drinking. This *gemara* is the basis for the *halacha* that one who starts *seuda shlishit* before *shki'a* may continue (Shulchan Aruch, OC 299:1).

Can one continue if he is in the middle of a less than complete Shabbat meal (including bread and *Birkat Hamazon*)? The Aruch Hashulchan (OC 299:5) says he may not continue. The Shevet Halevi (VIII, 36), keying on the fact that there are legitimate opinions that one does not need to eat bread at *seuda shlishit* (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 291:5), posits that whatever one uses for *seuda shlishit* will be important enough to allow you to continue.

Therefore, you definitely have whom to rely upon. Actually, non-gluten eaters are better off than others who have *seuda shlishit*

without bread. The Aruch Hashulchan (ibid.), in explaining his stringent opinion, argues that the fact that one did not have bread shows he did not give the meal requisite weight. While one can argue that in contemporary society, where many people rarely eat bread, other serious eating would also count. Regarding health motivated non-gluten dieters, we would expect a near consensus that their regular *seuda shlishit* would allow them to continue after dark, as the lack of bread is not a sign of a less level meal. ■

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Lessons in Leadership

At the conclusion of Sefer Yehoshua, our attention is grabbed by a series of non-sequiturs. Logically, the sefer should have ended in Chapter 24, verse 31, which describes the situation in Israel following the death of Yehoshua and whence the narrative continues in the opening verses of Sefer Shoftim. Surprisingly, the text now records an event that had taken place years earlier - the burial of the bones of Yosef, which had been brought up from Egypt by Moshe Rabbeinu and for which Yehoshua had assumed responsibility following Moshe's death. This information is followed by another unrelated statement, apprising us of the death of Elazar, son of Aharon HaKohen. What is the common denominator between the deaths and burials of Yehoshua, Yosef and Elazar, and why are the latter two appended to the conclusion of Sefer Yehoshua?

The Talmud teaches that Yosef was buried in Shechem, as recorded here, because it is from there that he was sold and brought to Mitzrayim, setting in motion the descent of the entire family to Egypt. Thus the story is brought full circle to its conclusion.¹ Perhaps mention of his burial is inserted here, even though it took place many years earlier, as an expression of hope that the divisiveness which led to the sale of Yosef had been laid to rest, and the relationship of the twelve tribes of Israel will now be one of unity as they forge their national life in Eretz Yisrael. This optimistic premise would explain the inclusion of Yosef's burial, but leaves us with an unanswered question regarding the death of Elazar.

Rav Yigal Ariel suggests that the three leaders mentioned here represent three models of leadership, each with a different philosophy towards interacting with the realities and challenges facing the young nation settling within its newly conquered borders. Yehoshua personifies military conquest, Yosef represents diplomacy, and Elazar epitomizes spiritual leadership. While the first two conflict with one another, both derive their effectiveness from the strength of the third.² Thus it would be necessary to record the death of Elazar alongside Yehoshua and Yosef, to clarify that the future success of either of their approaches would be dependent upon the nation's service of Hashem. Elazar's descendants would be the instruments through whom the nation would continue to

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serve Hashem, first in the Mishkan and ultimately in the Mikdash.

Similarly, Mishbetzot Zahav cites the Ramchal, who taught that Elazar is deliberately referred to as “ben Aharon” to indicate that just as Moshe Rabbeinu had transferred his authority to Yehoshua, the authority of Aharon was transmitted to Elazar. The welfare of the nation required that the political and spiritual leadership work together.³

Although Elazar’s leadership was integral to the paradigm of future leadership of the Jewish nation, it is Yehoshua who remains the exemplar of the transmission of leadership from the desert to the Land of Israel. Yehoshua’s leadership was a perfect reflection of his teacher’s legacy. Rav Soloveitchik explains that Moshe Rabbeinu transferred his leadership to Yehoshua by placing two hands on his head rather than just the one mandated by Hashem to demonstrate that “there were two *mesoros* that Moses transferred to Joshua. One is the tradition of Torah learning, of *lomdus*. The second *mesorah*, the *hod*, was experiential. One can know the entire *Maseches Shabbos* and yet still not know what Shabbos is. To truly know what Shabbos is, one has to spend time in a *Yiddishe* home... Joshua not only received the Torah from Moses, but also how to live *Yiddishkeit*. ומשךרתו יהושע בן נון נער לא ימיש מתוך. האהל - *His attendant, Joshua, son of Nun, a lad, would not depart from the tent (Ex. 33, 11)*. Joshua never left Moses’ side: He saw how Moses *davened Mincha*, how he ate, how he *bentched*, how he accepted Shabbos, how he said *vidui* on Erev Yom Kippur. He therefore merited both *mesoros*: the *mesorah* of the mind and the *mesorah* of the heart. And although Elazar was a greater *lamdan*, only

3. משבצות זהב ספר יהושע כד:לג

Joshua could transmit Torah to the next generation.”⁴ May we merit to transmit Torah to the next generation in the tradition of Moshe and Yehoshua, and may our leadership be guided by the principles of Torah and Avodat Hashem. ■

4. חומש מסורת הרב במדבר כז:לג

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women’s Initiative Nach Yomi program

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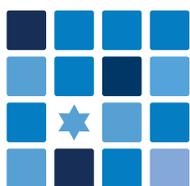
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What Batman Taught Us About Singles Events

לעילוי נשמת
 מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אצליהו הכהן ז"ל

Nine hundred singles walked into one Purim party this week. Nine hundred!

Now if you've ever hosted even nine people for Shabbat, you know that numbers don't create magic, atmosphere does.

At Shagririm Balev's Purim event, the evening was split into two parts: a lively fair packed with competitive booths (the kind that make grown adults surprisingly passionate about winning gummy bears), followed by a stand-up show by Guy Hochman that had the room roaring. On paper, that's great programming.

But here's what the feedback forms told us: the highest rating wasn't the games. It wasn't even the show. It was the *Tzevet* - the team.

This *Tzevet* is Ninety-nine percent

volunteers - head ambassadors who give all year long, most of them singles themselves. What people kept writing wasn't only "they worked hard", it was: "they saw me."

That's the secret.

If you want singles to feel comfortable, at a Shabbat table, at a party, at a community event, stop focusing only on logistics and start focusing on **dignity**.

Here's what that looks like in practice:

First, level the playing field. We asked everyone to come in costume. So the entire staff showed up in full Batman gear - capes, bold logos, and very extra face painting. Not half-way. Not "we're too cool for this." Full commitment. Why? Because every single person who walks into a singles event is already stepping out of their comfort zone. The least we can do as staff is take a step too. When leadership participates fully, even a little boldly, vulnerability becomes contagious, and suddenly the room feels safer.

Second, remove hierarchy. The staff didn't stand on the sidelines with clipboards and superiority. They played. They laughed. They waited in lines. They lost games. When the people running the event feel like peers rather than supervisors, walls fall down.

Third - and this one you can apply tonight, **include singles in contribution.** If someone asks, "What can I bring for Shabbat?" don't



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say, "Nothing, just come." Give them something real. A salad. Dessert. A Dvar Torah. A game for the kids. Contribution creates belonging, and belonging creates comfort. Many of the choices we made for this event came directly from feedback from singles on the Tzevet. The guiding principle was simple: it's not that we know better than the people we are trying to serve. When people have a voice in shaping what is being built for them, they stop feeling like guests and start feeling like partners - and that changes the emotional experience of the entire room.

Fourth, assume depth. Don't treat singles like fragile guests you must entertain. Treat them like adults with humor, intelligence, and emotional range. Respect is felt long before it's articulated.

What made 900 singles give such positive feedback wasn't the noise or the novelty. It was the quiet message underneath it all: **You are not a project. You are one of us.**

And that is something every one of us can replicate, one thoughtful decision at a time. ■



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She was like Aron, who loved
peace and pursued peace.



Yoni thanks Hashem for having
the opportunity of having Tziporah in
his life, to learn of her caring, patience and
happiness, to overcome her challenges. May
Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world,
in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama
shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with
tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a
crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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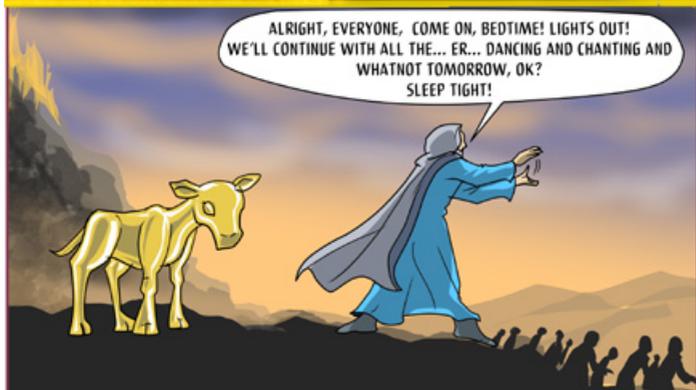
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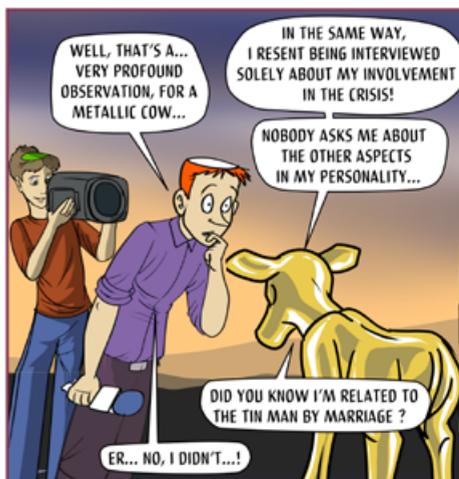
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AHARON, HOW COULD YOU?

The sin of the Golden Calf in this week's parsha is one of the greatest mistakes in Jewish history. Ironically, for a people known to be good with numbers, many of whom today are accountants, a huge mistake resulted from a small miscalculation of when Moshe was supposed to return from Har Sinai. One of the most striking issues in this week's parsha is Aharon's role in it all. We see in later parshiot that Aharon himself questions his worthiness to serve as the first Kohen Gadol following his involvement in the sin of the Golden Calf, prompting us to ask the same question.

One of the greatest mistakes one can make when learning Tanach is allowing the straightforward answer to satisfy the desire for a good explanation. True, we can come to the conclusion that Hashem forgave Aharon—and therefore, isn't that a good enough answer for us? If we allow ourselves to be satisfied with this simplistic answer, we miss so much depth and true insight into who Aharon was. Without such depth, we lose a vital lesson that can be learned from this week's parsha.

Aharon was faced with the most difficult of decisions. Should he suffer the same fate as Chur, son of Calev and Miriam, and be killed as he tried to oppose the building of the Golden Calf? Aharon understood the situation with profound wisdom, recognizing what we may not initially see. The Jewish

people had severely gone astray, but not so far that they couldn't do teshuva. Aharon realized that if the Jewish people were to kill him as well—the future Kohen Gadol—the damage to who they were would be irreversible. This would have altered all of Jewish history. There would be no coming back from a mistake of this magnitude.

Aharon had to act quickly, and true to what was always most important to him, he chose to participate in the sin rather than allow the Jewish people to reach this all-time low. His self-sacrifice—his willingness to lose everything—was precisely why he was the perfect Kohen Gadol. His love and devotion to the Jewish people were exactly what the role required.

Therefore, when reading this week's parsha, let us see the self-sacrifice of Aharon rather than the simple mistake of someone caught in a difficult situation. Once we expand our understanding of what Aharon did, we can ask ourselves how we can become true students of Aharon—loving peace and pursuing peace in our everyday lives.

Shabbat Shalom.



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people fall into the sin of the Golden Calf. This sharp change teaches an important lesson about fear, faith, and leadership.

When Moshe delayed coming down the mountain, the people became afraid and confused. Instead of trusting Hashem, they searched for something visible and powerful. The Golden Calf looked strong on the outside, but it was empty on the inside. The parsha shows that real strength does not come from what looks impressive, but from faith and patience.

When Moshe saw the calf, he broke the Luchot. This was not a sign of failure; it was an act of responsibility. Sometimes, when something goes very wrong, you cannot simply continue as before. You must stop, recognize the problem, and rebuild in a better way.

Our Sages teach that both the whole Luchot and the broken pieces were placed in the Aron. This teaches that even the difficult moments in our nation's history are not wasted. They become lessons that help us grow stronger.

After the sin, Hashem gave Bnei Yisrael the Second Luchot. Unlike the first, which were given with great noise, the second were given quietly, and they endured. This teaches that rebuilding with humility and unity creates strength that lasts.

“Ki tisa et rosh”-lift up your head. Even during challenges, the Jewish people know how to rebuild, grow, and move forward with faith in Hashem. ■

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