



כי תשא
Ki Tisa

Ashreinu | אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

שבת פרה

THE NECESSARY "FLIP-SIDE"

RABBI AKIVA WOLK

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ARIELLA BENGIO ('18)

SARA DEICHMAN ('19)

ATARA GOLDBERG ('18)

JORDAN LANDES ('18)

וַיִּשְׁלַךְ מִיָּדוֹ
אֶת-הַלְּחֹת,
וַיִּשְׁבֵּר אֹתָם
תַּחַת הַהָר

"And he cast the tablets out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mountain."

(Shmot 32:19)

After seeing the Jews' festivities surrounding the עגל הזהב, the golden calf, Moshe smashes the luchot; the people were not worthy of receiving them at that time. It is interesting to note that this pasuk has a קרי וכתוב. This means that there is a word that is written in one way, but read differently than its spelling would suggest. The word מידו, as it is written in the Torah, means "from his hand." We read it מידי and by adding the little yud, the word's meaning changes to "from his hands." What is the significance of this קרי וכתוב? What can we learn from this seemingly minor change?

The sefer Talalei Orot points out that the first of the luchot contain the מצוות בין אדם למקום, the laws focusing on our relationship with Hashem, while the second have the מצוות בין אדם לחבירו, or inter-personal mitzvot. Originally, Moshe thought that he should only smash one side of the luchot, the one with the mitzvot between us and Hashem. After all, the sin of the golden calf was done in the face of our Creator.

Therefore, the written pasuk has the word מידו -- from his ONE hand. But, we read the word מידי -- from his TWO hands. Moshe ultimately understood that you cannot have one side without the other. The two sides of our obligation, our relationship with Hashem on one side and with our fellow people on the other, are linked for all time. We cannot forsake one and keep the other -- they are attached. And so, Moshe smashed both. Later in the parsha, the second set of luchot are brought down from Har Sinai, thereby symbolizing the Jews' second chance to appropriately safeguard both sides of the luchot, as is our goal today.

ASCENDING THROUGH TESHUVA

ARIELLA BENGIO ('18)

THIS WEEK'S PARSHA IS KI TISA, WHICH TRANSLATES to "when you will lift up." This is ironic as it is in this parsha where one of the greatest sins in all of Jewish history occurred, the sin of the golden calf. Our sages teach us that all sins are derived from the sin of the calf and we are still repenting from it today. How can we title this parsha with a name that denotes elevation if we seem to be descending?

A common explanation according to some commentators is the greater the sin, the greater the spiritual strength we need to overcome it. The sin was so great that we are still growing stronger spiritually as we continue to repent today for this sin. Before the sin the Jews had just received the Torah and had not broken any commandments; thus, they were tzadikim. After their sin, they learned the concept of repentance and became baalei teshuvah, which some view as even greater than tzadikim.

WHY ONLY HALF?

SARA DEICHMAN ('19)

Parshat Ki Tisa begins as follows:

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל-הָעֵבֶר עַל-הַפְּקָדִים מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל

"This they shall give, everyone who goes through the counting..."

(Shmot 30:13)

THE PASUK ABOVE DESCRIBES THE EVENT OF Hashem requiring half a shekel from the nation. It is a well-known and seemingly understood story, but there is an underlying question begging to be answered. What is the significance of giving half a shekel, rather than a whole one? Many commentaries give their opinions on the question. The Alshich declares the half shekel as a reminder that we are not complete. We should always look to better ourselves and those around us because even if we seem satisfied, there is always another "half" for improvement. Another ex-

tremely beautiful answer is that the half shekel lies within our recognition. The truth is, a Jew is never complete without Hashem. Hashem is the nation's other half, and the quality held within the inanimate object of a half shekel is the need for our Creator. One may view being incomplete as an infraction or disadvantage.

The most beautiful thing of all is that in both of these ideas, Hashem values the fact that the nation is incomplete, and that is how we should be! The idea of being satisfied and content may be compelling, but the main lesson of the half-shekel command is that everyone should explore the possibility that being incomplete is both genuine and beautiful.

PATIENCE IS PARAMOUNT

ATARA GOLDBERG ('18)

THE MAIN STORY IN THIS WEEK'S PARSHA IS THE SIN of the golden calf. What's interesting about this sin is that it doesn't seem like the Jews are actually building an idol and doing avodah zara. Moshe says to Bnei Yisrael that he's going up to Har Sinai for 40 days, and Bnei Yisrael are confused because the day he starts going up they begin counting and on the final day he's still not back yet.

Bnei Yisrael start complaining and panicking, wondering where Moshe is. They grow impatient and begin building this golden calf. Bnei Yisrael's fundamental mistake is clear at this exact point: they lost patience, the serenity of knowing that life is a process and everything happens in its time. The golden calf was really acting as a figurehead to replace their missing leader, Moshe.

In life, patience is a virtue and we should try to go through life with a sense of patience and faith that everything will work out. Patience allows us to distance ourselves from sin and continue our relationship with Hashem.



HUMANS, THEY'RE UNPREDICTABLE

JORDAN LANDES ('18)

EVEN AFTER THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF commentaries, insights, and analysis, the story of Bnei Yisrael forming and worshipping the egel hazahav remains a puzzle. After all of the miracles in Mitzrayim, Kriat Yam Suf, and receiving the Torah at Har Sinai, how could this tragedy occur?

Even Aharon, our beloved priest, is not only involved but played a serious part in the actual creation of the calf. How could it be? There is almost no logical explanation to explain why all of this occurred!

Rabbi Berel Wein states that the Torah tells us this story in “relatively dry narrative prose.” It teaches us that there is no limit to the freedom of thought and behavior of human beings. No logic, miracles, or nevuah can limit the freedom of choice that Hashem grants us. Our freedom of choice is so definitive that Bnei Yisrael proved we can destroy ourselves without any thought or regret.

Rabbi Wein makes one more very astute point. While Moshe is out of town, Bnei Yisrael is leaderless. Even though Aharon and the other elders are there, they don't have the leadership that can guide a nation on the go. Successful nation building is dependent on wise, patient, and firm leadership. The leader has to not only stay on task, but stand up to his people in a manner that may sometimes be unpopular.



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KRIAH CONUNDRUMS

1. Which two people appear in the Torah for the first time in this parsha?

2. In what context is the "the finger of God" (Etzbah Elokim) mentioned? Where else in the Torah is the "the finger of God" mentioned?

3. The Hebrew word for mask is masecha, yet in this parsha the word used instead is masveh. Who wears this "mask"? And in what two contexts does the word masecha appear in the parsha?

4. In this parsha, what is explicitly referred to as made of gold? Where in the Torah is the first time these items mentioned?

5. Aside from this parsha, where else in the Torah is a partial list of the 13 attributes of Hashem mentioned?

6. In this parsha, what item is destroyed in four different ways, and how?

7. In what connection does a tzur (rock) appear in this parsha?



(1) Betzalel ben Uri, the artisan in charge of building the Mishkan, and his assistant, Aholiav ben Achisamach, appear in this parsha for the first time (Shmot 31:2,6). (2) The lachot of the Ten Commandments were written "with the finger of God" (Shmot 31:18). In Parshat V'era, the magicians of Egypt declare that the plague of lice displays "the finger of God" (Exodus 8:15). (3) At the end of the parsha, Moshe wears a masveh on his face after speaking with the people (Shmot 34:33). The Golden Calf is called an "egel masecha" (a molten calf) (32:4), and later the Jews are warned not to make any "lohei masecha" (molten gods) (34:17). (4) The earrings donated to fashion the Golden Calf are referred to as "golden earrings" (Shmot 32:2-3). The Golden Calf itself is called a "molten calf" (Exodus 32:4). In parshas Chayei Sarah when Eliezer meets Rivka, he gives her earrings (Genesis 24:22). (5) In parshat Shelach, Moshe entreats Hashem through the 13 attributes to forgive the nation for believing the evil report of the spies (Bamidbar 14:18). (6) The Golden Calf is burned, finely ground up, scattered on water, and then drunk by the nation (Shmot 32:20). (7) Hashem agrees to show Moshe His glory, and directs him to stand on ha'tzur - "the rock" (Shmot 33:21-22).