

LAMPLIGHTER

17 Adar 1
Parshas
Ki Tisa
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Ki Tisa, contains one of the most misunderstood occurrences in the Torah - the sin of the Golden Calf. As it appears in the Written Torah (without the accompanying commentary), the entire account is difficult to understand. How could the same Jewish people who had just left Egypt under miraculous circumstances, received the Torah at Mount Sinai amidst open miracles and actually heard the voice of G-d utter the first two of the Ten Commandments, stoop so low as to worship a molten image?

Closer study reveals that the Jewish people were not seeking a substitute for G-d in the golden calf; what they desired was a substitute for Moses, as expressed in the verse, "The people saw that Moses was delayed in coming down ...and they said [to Aaron]: Get up, make us a god...for this man, Moses, who has taken us out of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Without Moses, the Jewish people were in a quandary. Moses was the intermediary that connected them to G-d Above, as it states, "I stand between G-d and you." Moses was the medium through which the Children of Israel were freed from Egypt and through whom they received the Torah, to the point where "the Divine Presence spoke from his throat."

Moses is referred to as "a man of G-d," for despite the fact that he was mortal, Moses existed on a spiritual plane on which he was totally united with the Divine. His function as intermediary between man and G-d served to strengthen the Jews' belief in the Creator, for it is difficult to believe in a G-d one cannot see. When the Jews beheld a human being on such a G-dly level, it strengthened their faith in G-d and connected them to Him in a tangible manner.

In this light, it is easier to understand the mistake they made. When Moses did not reappear at the time they expected him, the Jewish people feared they had lost the ability to bind themselves with the Infinite. They rightly understood that such an intermediary needs to be completely united with G-d; having just witnessed the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, at which G-d descended in a "supernal chariot" bearing the face of an ox, they decided to forge a calf of gold that would closely resemble it.

The Jewish people were correct in recognising the need for an intermediary between man and G-d in the form of a G-dly human being; there was also nothing wrong with their choice of an inanimate object to draw holiness down into this world (G-d's voice would later issue forth from between the cherubim - fashioned in the form of two angels - above the holy ark in the Sanctuary).

Rather, their error was in taking into their own hands a matter which can only be determined by G-d. Only G-d has the authority to decide how His holiness will be transmitted; only He may choose the correct medium.

Adapted from the works of the Rebbe

G-d is Somewhere

By Yossy Goldman

So you think you're the first guy out there looking for G-d? People have been searching for spirituality, exploring the metaphysical and generally searching for truth for millennia. Even the greatest prophet of them all, Moses himself, was preoccupied with seeking the Divine. Moses wanted to see G-d in all His glory.

"Please, show me Your glory," Moses appeals in the 33rd chapter of Exodus. The commentators understand this to mean that he wanted it all, the ultimate revelation. Others see it as a quest for understanding the infinite ways of G-d, like why the righteous seem to be perennial sufferers and the wicked seem to be laughing all the way to the bank.

Whatever the meaning, the Almighty places limits on Moses' understanding. "You will see My back," G-d responds, "but My face may not be seen." Finite earthlings - even a Moses - can only perceive so much and no more. The face of G-d, the ultimate full picture, is beyond human comprehension.

A youngster was being given his lesson and he wanted to know, "Where is G-d?" The answer he received was, "G-d is everywhere." "That's the problem," said the child, "I want a G-d who is somewhere!"

"Everywhere" is abstract, theoretical and rather intangible. "Somewhere," on the other hand, is more defined, substantial and real. Yes, Judaism definitely believes that G-d is everywhere. But even more important is the somewhere where G-d is to be found.

In Judaism we find a clearly developed infrastructure of life. There is a list of behaviours that are considered G-dly, and another list that may seem a lot more attractive but is deemed to be unG-dly. We know what G-d expects of us - and what He does not. It isn't left to what feels good or bad to us in our highly personal and very subjective mindsets. There are objective rules of right and wrong. Morality and ethics are in the province of G-d and are therefore non-negotiable. Oh, we can talk about it and debate the issues all night long but, ultimately, our moral code is Divine and absolute.

I was once asked regarding a certain person whether he was "a religious person." I remember how that question was a moment of personal insight for me. From the perspective of the questioner, the answer was a definite "yes": the person he was asking about was a believer, came to synagogue faithfully every week, and did charity work-- the things that qualify a person to be called "religious" in the commonly accepted sense of the term. But in Judaism, the term "religious" carries different connotations. The most obvious one is Shabbat observance. Adhering to a kosher diet is another. The nitty-gritty do's and don'ts which the Torah instructs the Jew.

Faith in general, attending Shul and helping out are all nice, but still somewhat superficial. They are in the Everywhere category. Keeping Shabbat, though, is more in the Somewhere department. It is clearly defined and absolute. It goes beyond the surface-level feel good stuff. As Jews, we require a more precise definition of "religious." Practicalities not platitudes, action more than attitudes are the order of the day. G-d must be somewhere, not just everywhere.

In the final analysis, when we connect to G-d by doing His will we experience the greatest revelations.

Slice of LIFE

by Dudu Fisher

It was the winter night of 5 Shevat 5692/1932. A Jewish woman by the name of Fraida Gisha was in her ninth month of pregnancy in Riga, Latvia. A serious problem arose and the doctors recommended ending the pregnancy to save the woman's life.

The woman said to the doctors: "Wait, don't do anything." And to her sister standing next to her she said, "Leah, go and pray for me in shul."

Leah walked to the shul in the middle of the night. She entered and approached the holy ark. There she poured out her heart to G-d. She prayed and cried. Suddenly she felt a hand on her shoulder. She turned around and saw an older woman.

"Why are you crying?" asked the woman. Leah told her about her sister in the hospital.

"Come with me," said the woman. She took her to the home of the (previous) Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn. Leah wrote a note, said her sister was ill and the doctors were concerned and even wanted to end the pregnancy.

The Rebbe's faithful secretary, Rabbi Yechezkel Feigin, gave the note to the Rebbe. Five minutes later he came out of the Rebbe's room and gave Leah a letter with a response for her sister: "G-d should help you so that all will be well and so that you give birth to a healthy, live child."

With trembling hands, Leah took this letter and returned to the hospital. As she walked in, all the doctors came

running to her and exclaimed: We have no idea what happened here but an hour after you left, your sister went into a normal labor and a girl was born.' That was my mother. This baby girl was my mother.

We have the original note in a safe but everyone in the family, including me, of course, has a photocopy of the letter with them. When I travel the world, the letter is always in my pocket. Anybody in the family who gives birth takes the letter with her to the hospital.

For many years I was a cantor, just like my grandfather wanted me to be. One day, I was traveling in London and I saw the musical Les Miserables. As I sat there, I thought, I can do that.

When the musical arrived in Israel, I went to audition and was given the lead role of Jean Valjean. During the performance, the British producer Cameron Mackintosh came over to me and said: "Dudu, after you finish performing here in Israel, I want you to perform on Broadway."

I was thrilled. I couldn't believe it. I, Dudu Fisher of Petach Tikva, Israel, would appear on Broadway?

But I told him I didn't think that will be possible. He asked me why not and I explained that I am a religious Jew and I do not work on Friday night and Saturday.

A few months later I got a phone call from him, telling me triumphantly that he had managed to arrange that all the performances would take place only on weekdays.

Two months passed and there was another call from Mackintosh. This time, he had bad news. "Dudu," he said, "there's a problem. All the professional organizations are against

me and are unwilling to change the dates to weekdays only. I am fighting them all and as of now, I am not winning."

I was so very disappointed. My mother suggested that I go to the Rebbe.

At first I said to her: "People go to the Rebbe with serious problems of health, livelihood, and children. I should go to talk to the Rebbe about Broadway?"

But my mother urged me and I went. I thought I would need to explain my entire situation to the Rebbe but to my surprise, he immediately understood the issue. He looked straight at me and said: "Hold strong with Yiddishkeit (Torah and its commandments) and everything will be fine."

The Rebbe's look was so powerful. I looked at the Rebbe's eyes and felt calm. I felt certain that everything really would be fine. I resolved to stand strong on my principles and not perform on Shabbat.

Two months later I got a phone call from Mackintosh who told me that he had won the fight on my behalf, and I could perform on Broadway without compromising on Sabbath observance.

It was a miracle; until I got this job without Shabbat and Jewish holiday performances, there was no such thing. And afterward, until today, there has been nothing like it. I auditioned for many other shows and always, the moment it came to Shabbat observance, it fell through.

It's not an easy test. But those words of the Rebbe, "Hold strong with Yiddishkeit," continue to strengthen me all the time.

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MOSHIACH MATTERS

Our Sages highlight the connection between children and redemption by interpreting the verse, "Do not touch My anointed ones (meshichai)" (Chronicles I 16:22), as referring to Jewish children. Why are children given this title? - Because they have no other genuine concern besides Moshiach. A child truly wants to live in a world of peace, harmony, knowledge and joy, and these are the very qualities that will characterize the Era of the Redemption. (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Shushan Purim Katan 5752 - 1992*)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

28th of Teves 5721 [1961]

I received your recent letter and the previous one. Needless to say, I was somewhat taken aback by the tone of your letter. It is a good illustration of how it is possible for a person to read and to learn and to receive instruction from books and teachers, and yet when it comes to actual experience all this instruction goes by the wayside.

I refer to the things which you have surely learned in the books of mussar [ethics] and especially Chassidus about the tactics of the Yetzer Hora (evil inclination) to instill a spirit of depression, discouragement and despondency in order to prevent the Jewish person from fulfilling his Divine mission. This is the most effective approach. If the Yetzer Hora would attempt to dissuade a person directly from fulfilling his mission, he would not be easily misled. However, instead, the Yetzer tries to discourage the person in all sorts of ways, using "pious" arguments which unfortunately often prove effective at least in some degree.

This is exactly what has happened in your case and I am surprised that you do not realize it. The proof is that from the information I have received I can see that you have accomplished a great deal more than you imagine...

Let me also add another important and essential consideration. You surely know of the saying of the Baal Shem Tov that a soul comes down to live on this earth for a period of 70 to 80 years for the sole purpose to do another Jew a single favor, materially or spiritually. In other words, it is worthwhile for a Jewish soul to make that tremendous journey and descent from heaven to earth in order to do something once for a fellow Jew. In your case the journey was only from the U.S.A. to... and can in no way be compared to the journey of the soul from heaven to earth; and however pessimistic you may feel, even the Yetzer Hora would have to agree that you have done not only a single favor but numerous good deeds, and even only your work with the children of the Gan [kindergarten] would have justified it.

Considering further that every beginning is difficult especially where there is a change of place and environment, language, etc., and yet the beginning has proved so successful, so one is surely justified in expecting that as time goes on and the initial difficulties are minimized and overcome, there will be a more than corresponding improvement in the good accomplishments.

As for your mentioning the fact that no one seems interested in your work, etc., surely you will admit that G-d, whose knowledge and providence extends to everyone individually, knows and is interested in what you are doing, especially as you are working in the field of education of Jewish children, boys and girls, which is so much emphasized in the Torah. After all, to teach children to make a beracha [blessing] and to say the prayers, etc., this is living Yiddishkeit [Judaism]. (I need hardly add too that I am interested in your work). If it seems to you that it has been left to you to "carry the ball" yourself, it is surely only because there is confidence in you and that since you have been sent to... you undoubtedly have the ability, qualifications, and initiative to do your job without outside prompting, etc.

Since one is only human, it is not unusual to relapse occasionally into a mood of discouragement. But as has been explained in the [book of] Tanya and in other sources, such a relapse should only serve as a challenge to bring forth additional inner reserves and energy to overcome the tactics of the Yetzer Hora and to do ever better than before.

I trust that since you wrote your letter, your mood and outlook have considerably improved and that this letter will find you in a completely different frame of mind. Nevertheless, I am sending you this letter since one is only human and subject to changes of mind as mentioned above.

Finally I want to say that the above should not be understood to mean that if you do find yourself in such a frame of mind you should try to conceal it and not write about it, for our Sages say that "when someone has an anxiety he should relate it to others" for getting something off one's chest is a relief in itself. One should also bear in mind, as the Old Rebbe has stated most emphatically in the laws of learning and teaching Torah, that a person who is engaged in teaching children should especially take care of his health since it directly affects the success of his work. I trust therefore that you are looking after yourself in matters of diet and rest, etc., and that you will always be in a state of cheerfulness and gladness.

CUSTOMS CORNER

Importance of Tefillin

1. One who is meticulous concerning the mitzvah of Tefillin and treats Tefillin appropriately according to its holiness, merits a long life in this world and a portion in the world to come.
2. One who is meticulous regarding the mitzvah of Tefillin will not face the fire of Gehinom and will have his iniquities forgiven.
3. It is forbidden to laugh or come to lightheartedness while wearing Tefillin because it removes one's concentration and focus from the Tefillin.
4. It is preferable not to remove one's thoughts from the Tefillin at all so as not to come to think bad thoughts. However, during davening and learning one does not need to keep one's mind on Tefillin since one will certainly maintain a proper seriousness and fear of Hashem.
5. If one is not engaged in learning or praying and is still wearing the Tefillin one should occasionally touch one's Tefillin in order to keep one's attention focused on the Tefillin. One should touch one's Tefillin Shel Yad and then the Tefillin Shel Rosh.

A WORD

from the Director

This week's parshah begins with the mitzvah of machatzis hashekel. HaShem tells Moshe to count the Jewish people, but not to count them one by one. Instead, every one over the age of twenty had to bring a half-shekel. Then all the shekalim would be counted and in that way, Moshe would know the number of the people. Later, the money was used to purchase the animals offered as sacrifices.

But giving the half-shekalim was not just to figure out the number of the Jewish people. HaShem tells Moshe that the machatzis hashekel was kofer nefesh (an atonement for the soul). Kofer is the root of the word kapparah. When we do kapporos on Erev Yom Kippur, we are telling HaShem that we are truly sorry for what we have done. We know that we ourselves should be punished for the things we did wrong. But we take a chicken instead and it is our kapparah - our atonement for our sins.

The half-shekel which the Jewish people were commanded to give was also like kapporos, to atone for the sins that a person transgressed.

The Midrash tells us that Moshe found it hard to understand the mitzvah of machatzis hashekel, so HaShem showed him the fiery coin.

But what's so hard to understand about a half-shekel? It's a simple coin. Couldn't Moshe Rabbeinu have known what a half-shekel looked like without HaShem showing him?

And if HaShem had to show him, why did He show him a fiery coin and not a regular one?

The answer is that surely Moshe Rabbeinu knew what a half-shekel was. But he could not understand how this coin, a small amount of money, could be kofer nefesh - an atonement for wrongdoing - even for such deeds that a person deserved to have his nefesh taken away.

So HaShem showed him a fiery coin. HaShem taught Moshe that when a Jew takes his money and gives it for a holy purpose - to bring the sacrifices, support Torah study, or help a needy person - and he gives it wholeheartedly with joy and eagerness, a simple coin becomes a coin of fire. Then that fiery enthusiasm connects the money to the fire he has in his neshamah. Giving the money for tzedakah now becomes so powerful that it can be kofer nefesh - an atonement for his sins.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

A wealthy man in Berditchev had a reputation as a cheapskate, never contributing much to worthy communal causes.

When he died the Burial Society decreed an extra-large sum for a cemetery plot, no doubt figuring the deceased owed at least that much to the community coffers.

The heirs were shocked and refused to pay. The Burial Society's representatives wouldn't budge. After a heated discussion, both sides agreed to abide by whatever the Chief Rabbi of the city, Rabbi Levi Yitschak would rule.

To everyone's amazement, the rabbi displayed great distress to hear of the man's passing, and decreed that the family should not be charged anything for the burial other than what they would freely offer. He also told them to inform him personally of the time of the burial, for he wished to participate in the funeral.

Word of their rabbi's surprising reaction quickly spread to the populace of Berditchev, and they all joined him at the funeral to honour the deceased. Afterwards, the braver members of the community queried the tzadik why he deemed it appropriate to show such honour to an unlearned Jew who was known to all unfavourable as a miser.

Rabbi Levi Yitschak smiled and said, "This man was brought to court before me three times and each time he won the case. Then these three lawsuits were of such an unusual nature that the deceased definitely deserves to be honoured.

"The first case centred around a Jewish wine merchant, a man who would take advance payments from the storekeepers here, and travel with the money to buy wine in quantity from the wholesalers in one of the big cities. Once, as he was about to complete his purchase, he discovered that he had lost all of the money! Somehow it had fallen out of his pocket. He screamed and fainted.

"A doctor was called who aroused him, but as soon as the businessman realized where he was and remembered his loss, he fainted again. This repeated itself several times. The shock and grief were too much to bear; the doctor was unable to help him.

"At that moment the man whom we buried today passed by. When he heard the reason for all the commotion, he announced in a loud voice that he had found the money. Now the wine merchant was able to sustain consciousness, and upon receiving the entire missing amount from our man, thanked him profusely and went off to complete his business.

"What really happened is that the money had been found by someone else, a spectator at the scent who was unable to overcome the temptation and had silently stuffed the bills into his own pocket. But when he saw the extraordinary noble deed of the passing stranger, who had paid a huge sum of his own money in order to save the wine agent's sanity and perhaps his life, he began to regret his own behaviour. The thought took root in his mind and grew and grew. He found himself unable to spend the money and, finally, decided to return it.

"He travelled to Berditchev and sought out the benefactor of the fainting wine agent. He explained to him that he knows that he had really given his own money, because he himself was the true finder, and now he regretted his actions and wished to return the money.

"But the wealthy resident of our town - the deceased - refused to accept the money! He said, 'The fact that you didn't return the money on the spot to its rightful owner is your problem. However, Heaven provided me the opportunity to do a great mitzvah, and I have no desire to sell it back.'

"They argued back and forth for a while and then decided to bring the case to me. I had to rule in favour of the deceased of course. A man can't be forced to accept money (against his will).

The second case involved a poor man from Berditchev who wanted to travel far away in an attempt to change his luck. His wife, however, refused to let him. One day he came up with a plan. He told her that he had been hired by a wealthy magnate to attend to his business interests in distant cities. Since this would necessitate being away from home for an extended period, his employer had agreed to pay her a fixed amount for living expenses each Thursday, to be deducted from his salary when he returned.

"She felt secure with this arrangement, so she agreed to his departure. But the first Thursday, when she went to receive her fist allotment, the clerk in charge of disbursements told her that he had never heard of her or her husband.

"She screamed at him that her husband was not a liar; he shouted at her to leave him alone with her wild imaginings. As they each increased their volume, the noise reached the inner office of the proprietor, who hurried out to discover the source of the commotion.

"When he heard the woman's story, he told the cashier to pay her, saying, 'She is correct. I myself hired her husband and agreed to the conditions that she has stated. You may pay her the same sum each week till he returns.'

"A long time went by. Finally the husband returned. He was now a wealthy man, for G-d had granted him great success in his travels.

After the excitement of their emotional reunion, his wife told him that the arrangement had worked well; she had indeed received her steady allowance each week from the business, so the family had suffered no hardships during his long absence.

"The husband was astonished. But then he quickly realized what must have happened. He calculated the total amount that the business owner must have laid out, and hastened to see him, express his gratitude, and repay him.

"But the wealthy man, the one we buried today, refused to accept the money. He explained 'I didn't know you; I've never spoken to you; we never made an arrangement. Whatever money I gave the woman I gave her freely, in order to help her. It has nothing to do with you and I won't take your money.'

"They brought their 'dispute' before me and again I ruled in favour of the deceased, and for the same reason!

"The third case also involved one of our townspeople who was in a desperate financial situation. He had come upon an excellent business opportunity that promised great profit, but he didn't have any money of his own and wasn't able to muster the capital for the investment. He approached our deceased for a loan for the entire amount that he needed.

"Hmmm, let's see,' said the rich man. 'You admit you have no resources. How will you pay me back if your 'investment' doesn't work out? Who will be the guarantor of the loan?'

"The would-be borrower answered promptly, 'The Guarantor of all.'

"Ah,' replied our deceased. 'On His guarantee I am prepared to rely absolutely. Here is the money.'

"The investment indeed turned out to be highly profitable, although not as quickly as the borrower had hoped. Eventually he came to his benefactor to repay the interest-free loan.

"But the lender refused to accept the money. 'I already received the entire sum,' he insisted.

"What are you talking about? I didn't pay you anything yet.'

"True,' agreed the deceased. 'But the Guarantor you suggested, the Al-mighty, already paid me the entire debt, and quite a bit more too.'

"The borrower couldn't accept this so they brought the case to me, and again I ruled in favour of the deceased.

"Now, don't you agree that a man who won three such lawsuits deserves to be honoured at his death, even if he portrayed himself publicly as a miser?'

ב"ה

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**Why doesn't G-d respond to my requests?
 Why is slavery sanctioned in the Torah?
 Why are there no more miracles of Biblical proportion?**
”

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CANDLE LIGHTING: 26 FEBRUARY 2016

BEGINS	ENDS
7.47MELBOURNE	8.44
7.50ADELAIDE	8.35
6.05BRISBANE	6.58
6.56DARWIN	7.46
6.04GOLD COAST	6.57
6.45PERTH	7.40
7.18SYDNEY	8.13
7.28CANBERRA	8.23
7.43LAUNCESTON	8.42
7.52AUCKLAND	8.43
7.52WELLINGTON	8.51
7.44HOBART	8.44
7.04BYRON BAY	7.57



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD
 PARSHAS KI SISA • 17 ADAR • 26 FEBRUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT	CANDLE LIGHTING: MINCHA: KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	7.47 PM 7.55 PM 8.25 PM
SHABBOS:	SHACHARIS: LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA: MINCHA: SHABBOS ENDS:	10.00 AM 10.17 AM 7.40 PM 8.44 PM
WEEKDAYS	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI: MINCHA: MAARIV:	8.00 AM / 9.15 AM 7.00 / 7.55 PM 8.25 PM