

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Ki Tisa

16 Adar 5772/March 10, 2012

Vol.3 Num. 24

Sponsored by Nathan Kirsh in honour of the members of the Beit Midrash

Lessons of a Golden Calf

Hillel Horovitz

Moshe ascends Har Sinai for an experience in which he is elevated to angelic levels, until he is told, "Go, descend, for your nation has sinned." (Shemot 32:7) Moshe returns to the Jewish encampment to find the Golden Calf; he destroys the statue, punishes the sinners and then turns his attention to defending the nation before G-d.

Included in Moshe's defense of the nation is an unusual request; Moshe beseeches HaShem, "Show me Your glory." (Shemot 33:18) The most brilliant of biblical commentators have exerted great efforts to explain what, precisely, Moshe wished to see. It is inconceivable to suggest that Moshe wished to perceive an image of G-d; the loftiest of our prophets certainly knew that G-d has neither form nor the image of a form! Rather, as some explain, Moshe seeks to perceive the path of Divine involvement in our world, to understand how G-d directs human history. [See, for example, Shemot Rabbah 45.] To this request G-d replies, "You will see My back; My face will not be seen." Man cannot perceive this in direct fashion.

Moshe's request, in its timing as well as substance, is confounding. This is Moshe's request in the wake of the Golden Calf? The nation has sinned, Moshe has barely succeeded in saving them from punishment – is this the

appropriate time to request revelation of Divine glory? Might Moshe's energies and efforts not be better invested in rehabilitating the Children of Israel?

The Slonimer Rebbe, in Netivot Shalom, explains that Moshe sought more than access to the Infinite. Moshe was expressing his utter bewilderment at the national collapse G-d had permitted to take place. Free Will notwithstanding, Moshe cannot understand how G-d could have allowed an entire nation to sin in such a way. And so Moshe turns to G-d and asks, "Show me Your glory" – Where is Divine glory, in the wake of such a debacle? What will the nations say? How does the sin of the Golden Calf fit within the greater plan of Yeshayah 43:21, "I created this nation for Myself, they will speak My praises"? Is this the praise of the Divine?

To this request G-d responds by saying unequivocally that one may perceive the "back" of G-d, but not His "face". G-d informs Moshe: We are now at the start of the path, at which time it is hard to comprehend how G-d directs His world. Only in retrospect can we attempt to understand; after hundreds of years, perhaps, Man might grasp how the Golden Calf was part of the path of constructing the Jewish nation.

We may perceive a partial answer to Moshe's question in a lesson the Golden

Calf incident conveyed about worship of G-d. Rashi struggles to understand how the Jews could have committed such a sin after receiving the Torah, and his answer is rooted in the sentence G-d uses to describe the sin itself. G-d says to Moshe, "They strayed quickly from the path." They did not abandon, but they strayed. They did not stray from G-d, but from the path. These nuances are part of the textual hints which motivate the midrash Rashi cites to explain that the Satan exhibited Moshe's funeral to the Jewish people, and that the people then decided to find another path with which to connect to G-d. This is why they prepared the Calf; it was not service of a foreign god, but foreign service of our G-d.

In this light, the sin of the Calf teaches us that there is a way to serve G-d, a time and a place, and it is not for us to decide independently that another approach to worship would be more to our liking. Service of G-d requires not only our desire to give, but also Divine desire for our giving. The same message appears later in the Torah, when the sons of Aharon bring "a foreign fire" and are consumed; the Torah emphasizes that they brought "a foreign fire, in which they had not been commanded." (Vayikra 10:1)

How might we avoid emulating this error, and how might we know that our intentions are desirable? Perhaps the answer is embedded in the start of our parshah. The Jews are instructed to give a half-shekel donation, leading many readers to ask why we are to bring half, rather than a whole unit. But perhaps this is the way to serve G-d; when we recognize that our desire is only half of the matter, only one part of the puzzle, then we are inspired to seek the Divine half and ensure that our half is a match. Or, to cite Pirkei Avot, "Make your will as His will." When we do this, we will fulfill the mission identified in Yeshayah 43:21, "I created this nation for Myself, they will speak My praises."

Parshah Questions

R' Meir Lipschitz

(Answers for some of the questions are on the back page)

- For what sin was the half-shekel meant to atone? (Tanchuma Ki Tisa 10)
- What is meant by the words charut al haluchot? Why is the way the luchot were made important? (Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra and Chanukat HaTorah to Shemot 32:16, and Avot 6:2)
- Why did Moshe challenge Hashem's actions by mentioning what Egypt might say about these events? (Rashbam, Targum Yonatan, Kli Yakar, and Ohr HaChaim to Shemot 32:11-12, Beit HaLevi derush 2)
- For children: How much greater is the reward for good deeds than the punishment for bad deeds? (Rashi to Shemot 34:7)

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There are divergent practices regarding sitting and standing during *keriat haTorah* (the public Torah reading); some people sit, others stand. What are the bases for these practices? Is one preferred over the other?

One text that seems to support standing is Nehemiah 8:5, which says that Ezra opened the Torah [to read from it], and "*amdu kol ha'am*." *Amdu kol ha'am* is literally translated as "the nation stood up". However, the commentators note that in this context, *amdu* is telling us that the people refrained from speaking. Indeed, the root *a-m-d* is used in other places to mean "refrain" (see Bereishit 29:35). Thus, the verse from Nehemiah does not indicate that one must stand for Torah reading.

Another possible source for standing is from the Talmud (Megilah 21a), where the gemara says that one fulfills the mitzvah of reading the megilah while sitting, unlike regarding *keriat haTorah*, for which one must stand. However, Rashi there explains that this gemara refers to the reader; the reader of the Torah, not the listeners, must stand. Thus, this gemara does not support the practice of listeners to stand for Torah reading.

The Tur (Orach Chaim 146), quoting from Rav Sar-Shalom (one of the Geonim), says that he has not seen anyone whose practice is to stand for *keriat haTorah*, for the verse from Nehemiah does not mean that one must stand. The Beit Yosef (ad loc.) quotes the Ba'al HaManhig (Rav Avraham ben Natan HaYarchi, France 12th century)

saying that those who stand actually misunderstand the passage from Nehemiah! Based on this, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 146:4) writes that "one need not stand when the Torah is being read."

A gloss to the Shulchan Aruch appears where the Rama's comments usually appear, stating that some people stand, and that the Maharam of Rotenberg (Germany, 13th century) stood. Determining the author of this gloss is critical; if the Rama wrote this, then Rama-based, Ashkenazi practice should be to stand. Based on manuscript research, however, the Chida (R' Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai, 18th century Turkey) writes that the Rama did not insert this gloss, and so the statement does not indicate normative Ashkenazi practice.

The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (23:6) writes that one need not stand for *keriat haTorah*, but those who are meticulous in their observance of mitzvot stand, and this is appropriate to do. The Mishnah Berurah (146:17) writes that one need not stand for *keriat haTorah*.

The Mishnah Berurah (146:19) and Rav Soloveitchik (Nefesh HaRav pg. 136) explain that the basis for standing during *keriat haTorah* is that we are re-creating the experience at Har Sinai, where we received the Torah while standing. (Shemot 19:17) This is important for those who sit, too; listening to *keriat HaTorah* should engender the same feeling of excitement as the day that the Torah was given on Har Sinai.

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613 Mitzvot: #144

The Thought that Counts

R' Mordechai Torczyner

Many mitzvot are composed of two distinct components: Thought and Deed. Although we intuitively understand that both components are necessary, it is easy to slip into rote performance of mitzvot and forget the emphasis on thoughtful intent.

The prophets were particularly concerned about this pitfall regarding the korbanot brought in the Beit haMikdash; it is easy to become so absorbed in the compelling deed of sacrifice that one forgets the intent. As explained by the Rambam (Moreh haNevuchim 3:32), this is what Yirmiyahu meant when he said, "I did not speak to your ancestors and I did not command them regarding

korbanot, on the day I took them out of Egypt": HaShem never told us to bring korbanot without proper intent.

As part of ensuring proper intent, the Torah requires that korbanot be brought with an understanding of the type of korban involved, where the service is to be conducted, and when this is to happen. Mistakes in the first two areas may disqualify the korban. Further, the 144th mitzvah teaches that incorrect intent regarding time renders a korban *pigul*, and it must be burned. No one may eat from this korban.

For further explanation of this law's deeper message, see Torat haOlah 2:24.

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Hitoriri: Jewish Spirituality

30 Days Before Pesach

R' Baruch Weintraub

From Purim onward, we enter the season which halachic authorities term "30 days before Pesach". What is the character of this time period?

The gemara (Pesachim 6a) addresses the case of a person who leaves home before Pesach, intending to remain away until after Pesach. Is such a person obligated to destroy his chametz? The gemara contends that he is not, and by way of explanation the gemara cites a b'raita which states, "We inquire and educate regarding the laws of Pesach thirty days before Pesach." But this answer itself requires explanation: Why should the practice of studying the laws of Pesach mandate destruction of chametz?

The Mishneh Berurah may offer an explanation. The Rama (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 445) rules that one may destroy his chametz at night, after the search, without waiting for the morning. The Mishneh Berurah (445:8) notes that this fulfills the mitzvah of destroying chametz, "for the obligation to destroy chametz begins thirty days before Pesach." This means that the mitzvot of the holiday, and not only the questions and concerns, begin thirty days in advance.

This idea suggested by the Mishneh Berurah may be supported by a responsum of Rashba (1:140), "Thirty days before the holiday is the **time of the holiday**, as we have learned, 'We inquire and educate regarding the laws of Pesach thirty days before Pesach'... And so for searching for chametz... And so for one who is departing." If so, we now understand the gemara's message: The law of learning before the holiday demonstrates that we are within the Pesach season, so that one who leaves his home is expected to destroy his chametz first.

We are now found within this "Pesach season", but it is about more than simply cleaning. The Pesach season, the time of our freedom, summons us not only to prepare our homes, and not only to learn the many relevant laws, but to raise our heads from the daily distractions which surround us, such that we will be prepared, come the night of the seder, to see ourselves as though we had been redeemed from Egypt.

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Torah in Translation Physical Materials, Spiritual Meaning

**Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk
Noam Elimelech to Parshat Ki Tisa
Translated by R' Dovid Zirkind**

"You shall make a basin of copper" (Shemot 30:18)

It appears appropriate to explain that Hashem commanded him to take three materials for the garments of the Kohanim: gold, silver and copper. It may be said that the holy Torah hinted to a man who wants to engage holiness and G-d's worship that he must humble himself to the fullest extent; as the Tanna states (Avot 4:4), "Very much shall you be humble."

This is hinted in the letters of *'zahav* [gold], in which each letter [*zayin-heh-bet*] is of a smaller numerical value than the one before it. This reminds the man who wishes to engage holiness – a lofty position symbolized by gold, a precious metal – that he must break his haughtiness and elevation hidden within him. To the fullest extent of humility he must lower himself.

Silver [*kesef*] symbolizes love and desire for the worship of G-d, like "*nichsof nichsafta*" – *you have longed for*. (Bereishit 31:30) The letters of 'silver' [*kaf-samech-peh*] increase in numerical value. Each number is greater than the one before it, hinting that man must always grow and persevere toward his maximum potential in service of G-d.

Copper [*nechoshet*] is derived from *nachash*, the snake, in a case of cognate language. It refers to the physicality of eating and drinking and this-worldly physicality which originated with the snake and must be gathered in toward holiness. Man should eat and drink in holiness, in purity and with pure thoughts, all for the sake of worshipping Hashem. Through this, he will affect Divine influences on Israel and the world.

This is the command to build the *kiyor* [basin]. The basin influences and pours water from the spouts within it. G-d commanded that the *kiyor* should be made such that it would cause influences by way of copper, meaning, by way of the physicality that is used in holiness and purity.

"Its base of copper" – "Base" is a seat or foundation. This means they should create a solid foundation to influence Israel through the physical. For this reason, Moshe Rabbeinu originally refused the mirrors that the women brought him to make the *kiyor*, until G-d commanded him to accept them...

One of the earliest figures in Chassidic history, and one of its most influential thinkers, was Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk. Born in 1717 in Galicia, Rabbi Elimelech was recognized as one of the great students of the Maggid of Mezerich.

Prior to the death of the Maggid, the early Chassidic movement was unified as a single group of the Baal Shem Tov's students. However, after the Maggid's death Chassidut was fragmented, and Rabbi Elimelech returned to Lizhensk to spread the thought of his teachers in southeastern Poland. His students include the Chozeh of Lublin, the Maggid of Koznitz and Menachem Mendel of Rimanov. He is commonly referred to as "the Noam Elimelech", the name of his mystical commentary to Torah (see translation).

Many legends speak of the unique relationship of Rabbi Elimelech and his brother Reb Zushya. Both were known to be extraordinarily pious individuals, but their contrasting personalities made their tales legendary. Here is one such story:

Rabbi Elimelech and Reb Zushya were once falsely accused of a crime and placed in prison with a group of other inmates. At one point in their stay, Rabbi Elimelech started to cry. Zushya asked, "Brother, why are you crying?" Rabbi Elimelech explained that he was saddened because he could not daven minchah in a room where prisoners had relieved themselves. Reb Zushya challenged his brother's reaction: "Is it not the same G-d who commanded you to pray, who is now forbidding you from doing so? Then you should not despair!" With that, Rabbi Elimelech took his brother by the hand and began to dance in great happiness.

The guards came running when they heard the commotion coming from the cell. They asked one of the inmates what was happening, and he explained that the two brothers had been arguing over the pail in the corner of the cell until they had suddenly began to dance. The guards replied, "If the pail makes these brothers so happy, we will remove it!" The pail was removed and Rabbi Elimelech davened minchah.

The Noam Elimelech died in 1787, on the 21st of Adar. His yartzzeit is observed by many who visit his grave each year, and some communities do not recite tachanun on that day.

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The Nahal Hermon Reserve (also known as Banias Nature Reserve) is a popular destination for hikers in the Golan Heights. Most of the areas's trails cross ancient Jewish cities and Roman and Crusader sites, as well as dense forests. The trails end with the Banias Waterfall, generally considered the most impressive in Israel. Rising from a spring at the base of Mount Hermon, the waterfall flows for another nine kilometers until it reaches the Dan River and eventually flows into the Jordan.

Because this site provides an important water resource for the region, the Arab League decided in 1964 to begin a water diversion project to direct 20 to 30 million cubic metres of water per year to Syria and Jordan. Further, from 1948 until 1967 the region served the Syrians as a base for attacks on nearby Kibbutz Dan. On June 10, 1967, the last day of the Six Day War, the Golani Brigade took control of the area, giving Israel full control of the river, stopping the Arab League's plan to divert the waters and halting the attacks.

According to some scholars, the area's ruined city, now known as Dan or Mivzar Dan, may be the site known in Tanach as Rechov. This was the northern limit of the spies' expedition (Bamidbar 13:21) and the area in which Dovid took to battle against Aram. (Shemuel 2 10) From evidence in the Cairo Genizah and other documents, the area seems to have been settled by a large, organized Israelite/Babylonian Jewish community in the 11th century, complete with a Beit Din and other institutions. Benjamin of Tudela's 12th century "Book of Travels" makes no mention of such a community, which leads many to believe that it was destroyed by Crusaders.

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For what sin was the half-shekel donation meant to atone?

Midrash Tanchuma suggests three different sins for which the half-shekel was meant to atone: 1) The sin of the Golden Calf, which occurred at six hours (ie half) of the day, 2) For violating the ten commandments, since a half-shekel is the equivalent of ten *geirah*, and 3) The sale of Yosef, in which each brother took a coin, such that now each Jew must give a coin.

What is meant by the words *charut al haluchot*? Why is the way the *luchot* were made important?

- **Rashi** explains the words to mean "etched into the *luchot*."
- **Rashbam** offers two words to explain the uncommon word "*charut*," one meaning "etched", like Rashi, and the other meaning "plowed" because the words were indented (engraved) in the stone.
- **Ibn Ezra** also suggests that it means etched, and in addition he claims that this word is an anomaly (hapax legomenon), appearing once in all of Tanach. He offers another option, that the *luchot* appeared open.
- The mishnah in **Avot 6:2** employs a play on words to read the word not as *charut* but rather *cheirut*, which

means freedom. The homiletic reading suggests that only those who study Torah are truly free.

- **Chanukat HaTorah**, based on **Midrash Tanchuma** (Shelach 13), explains that the word should be read "free" rather than "etched," like the mishnah in Avot, but referring to a different freedom. Learning Torah provides a person with freedom from the angel of death.

Why did Moshe challenge HaShem's actions by mentioning what Egypt might say about these events?

- **Targum Yonatan** reads the words to mean that the Egyptians will claim that HaShem went back, or changed his mind, *chas v'shalom*, on his earlier statements about His love and favour towards the Jewish people.
- **Rashbam** suggests that Moshe was telling Hashem that He must act this way, and not destroy the Jewish people, so that His Name not be profaned.
- **Ohr HaChaim** explains why the comments of the Egyptians would be a chilul HaShem. HaShem took the Jewish people out of Egypt stating "*B'ni bechori Yisrael... shalach et b'ni v'ya'avdeini*," in essence claiming that it was for the good of the people.

Should HaShem destroy the nation, the Egyptians would say that their exodus was not for the good, and Hashem's earlier words would seem like falsehood.

- **Beit HaLevi, derush 2**- The nation had already committed sins while in Egypt, but they weren't punished then since they weren't liable for it. However, now that they committed the sin of the Golden Calf for which they deserved destruction, the Egyptians would claim that the Jews were being punished for their old, Egyptian sins, and not the current one- which would lead to a desecration of G-d's Name because the Egyptians would believe that the reason He took the nation out of Egypt was to punish them in the wilderness, not to free them from oppression and slavery.

For children: How much greater is the reward for good deeds than the punishment for bad deeds?

Rashi explains that the reward for good deeds is 500 times greater than the punishment for bad deeds. Good deeds are re-paid for 2000 generations, while bad deeds are only punished for four generations.

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Schedule for March 10-16 / 16 - 22 Adar

Shabbat March 10

7:45 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Rav Kook on the Parshah, Or Chaim **not this week**

10:20 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Parshah, Clanton Park
After Hashkama Hillel Horovitz, Bnai Torah, Divine Mercy and Human mercy (Hebrew)

1 hour before minchah Yair Manas: Gemara Sukkah, Mizrahi Bayit

45 minutes before minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi: Temurah 24, BAYT

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Stages of Growth: Gemara Avodah Zarah, BAYT **not this week**

Sunday, March 11

9:15 AM Hillel Horovitz, Parshah, **Hebrew**, Zichron Yisroel

11:00 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Hilchot Melachim, Or Chaim, *collegiates*

After maariv R' Baruch Weintraub, Halachic issues in Israel: Plea Bargains II, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, *men*

8:00 PM R' Dovid Zirkind, Dina d'Malchuta & Prenuptials, 631 Coldstream Ave, *for young professionals*

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Halachic issues in Israel: Plea Bargains II, **Hebrew**, 4 Tillingham Keep, *mixed*

Monday, March 12

8:30 PM Hillel Horovitz, In-Depth Siddur, Clanton Park, *men*

Tuesday, March 13

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Zecharyah: The pauper on the donkey, *Mekorot*, Shaarei Shomayim

7:15 PM R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Ramban: The Disputation, BAYT

8:00 PM Hillel Horovitz, Early Prophets 4: The King's Authority, Bnai Torah

8:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Ovens and Kashrut, 26 Meadowbrook Apt 8, *women*

8:00 PM Mrs. Elyssa Goldschmiedt, Malbim on Chumash, TCS, *women*

8:15 PM Yair Manas: Minchat Chinuch, Clanton Park

Wednesday, March 14

10:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Dramas of Jewish History: Messianism, BEBY, with Melton

12:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Medical Ethics at York: Alternative Medicine, *lunch*

8:00 PM R' Dovid Zirkind, Gemara Beitzah, 2nd Perek, Shaarei Shomayim

8:00 PM R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, The Meat and Potatoes of the Haggadah (Part 1 of 2), BAYT

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Hilchot Melachim: Too many horses?, Shomrai Shabbos, *men*

Thursday, March 15

9:15 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Rav Kook on Maggid I, 36 Theodore Ct, Thornhill, *women, free babysitting*

Friday, March 16

8:00 AM R' Dovid Zirkind, Friday Parshah Preview, Village Shul