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## Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Ki Sisa 5772

**Jerusalem Post :: Friday, March 9, 2012**  
**COSTUME OR DISGUISE :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

One of the favorite customs of Purim is that people – otherwise apparently sane and normal – dress up in costumes and masks. For one day a year at least they are allowed to pretend to be what they are not. One can be a pirate or an Arab, a charedi or a sports hero, a kibbutznik or a police officer – just as long as the person realizes that it is only a costume that one wears and not the real thing.

However many psychological studies have indicated that perhaps the costume that we wear on Purim is in actuality an expression of the real person. It illustrates the innermost desire to really be what the costume represents. As such this subliminal understanding transforms our everyday appearance into being a disguise, masking our true self and ambition.

It is as though all year long we are masquerading as someone that we are not and only on Purim do we really reveal ourselves. This play acting is an integral part of life, especially in our current societal mode of behavior and appearance. We are to be judged by our appearance, by a kippah or lack of it, the length of our jacket and the choice of our clothes. But who is the real person? Which is the costume and which is the disguise?

As the great rebbe of Kotzk, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern (Halperin) phrased it: “If I am I and you are you, then I am I and you are you. But if I am you and you are me then I am not I and you are not you.” As such, Purim represents our almost eternal state of confusion about our real selves and our purpose in life. Purim challenges us to reveal what the real really is.

The rabbis indicate that on Purim one should arrive at a state where one does not know the difference between blessing Mordecai and cursing Haman. Even more troubling is the fact that we find it difficult to identify who is the real Haman and who is the real Mordecai in our lives. Haman often dresses in the clothing of Mordecai and disguises himself ably. And Mordecai is often seen wearing kingly, non-Jewish clothing that is but a costume and not his reality.

In a world of disguises and costumes it certainly is difficult to identify heroes and villains, the good and the not so good. Is the professed love of Israel proclaimed by J Street and Peace Now a disguise that hides their true enmity to Israel’s current existence as a Jewish state? Or maybe they really love Israel and their harmful anti-Israel statements and policies are only a costume but not their real agenda and identity?

How is one to know definitely? The European Union, the American State Department and the American President and administration all profess their loyalty to Israel’s rightful existence. Is that what they really think and believe? Can they ever be relied upon when moments of truth and hard decisions arrive? Are they cursed Haman or blessed Mordecai? And how are we to be able to discern this difference? Difficult Purim questions exist in our world.

At the end of all matters, the Lord apparently decides. We can only do our best and act as reasonably and rationally as possible to protect our own self interest. Purim points out to us that in all instances regarding the Jewish people - and certainly the Jewish state - are existential in their very nature. Wrong decisions and misreading the true face of events will always result in wrong policies, painful defeats and the spilling of Jewish blood.

The last twenty years of Israeli diplomacy points out the truth of this statement. Rabin and Peres did not see Arafat as Haman. They were dead wrong. Netanyahu originally misjudged Abu Mazen. He was also wrong. The whole world mistook the Arab Spring as a positive thing and threw long time allies under the revolutionary Islamic bus. They are being proven wrong daily. And what would be our position today if Assad, the father, accepted Ehud Barak’s offer of almost all the Golan to be returned to Syria?

Only the Lord has saved us from our mistakes and errors of wrong identification and poor judgment. And we all know that the hidden miracle of Purim is the Lord’s actions, so to speak, behind the scenes and through the behavior of various human beings. So, we are once again returned to Purim like circumstances in our own times. Look carefully to see who is wearing the costume and who is wearing a disguise. Our future depends upon this.

Shabat shalom.

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**Weekly Parsha :: KI TISA :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

The Torah commands that a count of the Jewish people should be undertaken. Such a count was in fact taken a number of times during the sojourn of the people of Israel in the Sinai desert. What is noteworthy is the language – the words the Torah uses in ordering this count to take place.

The literal translation of those words is “When you raise the heads of the Jewish people to assess their numbers...” The Torah does not state simply “when you count the people of Israel.” Instead it teaches us a very important lesson in Jewish and family life. A person who is counted and considers himself or herself to be part of the Jewish people has to do so by being a person with a raised head. That person has to feel that he or she is special, chosen, set aside for a particular mission in life. The raised head is the symbol of Jewish pride and determination.

The count of the Jewish people is not meant to be merely numerical. It is far more profound and meaningful. It is really a count-me-in type of equation. Thus the task of the leader of the people is not only to come up with an accurate population number but, perhaps even more importantly, to inspire and raise those being counted to a greater understanding of their role and purpose in being part of the Jewish people. For eventually, being counted as a member of the Jewish people requires commitment, effort and constant personal development.

We are all aware of the injunction not to count Jews directly, as in this week’s parsha, where they were counted by the number of half shekels collected by the census takers. We read in the book of Shmuel that King Saul counted the Jewish people by assessing the number of individual sheep. The same lesson is involved in this rule as the idea mentioned in the previous paragraph – that the true count of the people of Israel is never only in the raw number of people present. It is in the worth of the individual, the pride and self-esteem of being Jewish - and that is not something that can easily be assessed by a number.

Coins and sheep are susceptible to being counted numerically – not the Jewish people or for that matter any human being. The influence of a life is something not given to physical measurement or numerical count. The Torah commands us to raise our heads, to become more knowledgeable, devoted and committed to its holy values, observances and spiritual outlook. Each individual Jew must feel and believe that he or she is special, unique, vital and necessary for the whole nation to exist and prosper.

People who feel “there is no difference if I am Jewish, observant, or part of a people” do themselves and the Jewish people as a whole a great disservice. Only those who proudly raise their heads are truly part of the eternal count of the Jewish people.

Shabat shalom.

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**Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Ki Tisa**  
**For the week ending 10 March 2012 / 15 Adar I 5772**  
**by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - [www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com)**  
**Insights**  
**One Step Beyond**

**“...he will give Teruma of G-d.” (30:14)**

The entire Oral Torah begins with the question, “When do we read the Shema prayer in the evening?” The Mishna answers, “When the kohanim go in to eat their Teruma (the priestly gifts).”

What is the connection between saying the Shema and the mitzvah of Teruma? Why didn't the Mishna just say, “The time to say Shema in the evening is when it gets dark”?

The Torah obligation to give Teruma is as little as a single grain. The Rabbinic obligation, however mandates between one-sixtieth, which is considered miserly, and one-fortieth, which is generous. The median amount is one-fiftieth. The word “Teruma” is an allusion to this median amount, for Teruma stands for *trei mi-me'ah*, two out of one hundred — one-fiftieth.

If the Torah was hinting through the word Teruma to the median gift of one-fiftieth, why did it express that fraction as two parts out of a hundred? Why didn't it coin instead a word that used the words for ‘one’ and ‘fifty’ — Chad and Chamishim? Why wasn't Teruma called “Chadshim” or something like that? And why specifically the proportion of two out of a hundred? Why not four parts out of two hundred, or eight out of four hundred?

The Vilna Gaon explains that the core of Shema lies in the first verse, Shema Yisrael, and in the next phrase Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuto le'olam va'ed, “Blessed is Hashem's name of the Honor of His Kingdom for ever and ever,” which we say immediately afterward. The essence of Shema is to affirm our belief that everything in existence is One and the smallest aspect of creation ultimately leads to Him alone.

The Gaon of Vilna observed that the twenty-five letters in the first verse of Shema and the twenty-four letters in Baruch Shem together equal forty-nine.

The number fifty connotes something beyond this world. We count forty-nine days of the Omer from Pesach till Shavuot, but we do not count the final day, the day of Shavuot itself, because Shavuot represents something beyond this world — the supernal moment of the closest encounter between G-d and man.

In this world, we can approach fifty, but we cannot count it; we cannot define or delineate it.

When I say the Shema I surrender the ineffable, indisputable knowledge of my own existence and proclaim that there is only One Existence, and that I am no more than just one expression of that Ultimate Existence. That is the ‘one’ that I give to make the fifty complete.

My recitation of the Shema — my own closest encounter with G-d — represents the “one” that raises the forty-nine to fifty. And as I say the Shema twice daily, it represents the *trei mi-me'ah* — the two out of a hundred.

*Trei mi-me'ah*— twice a day, the Teruma that I give is the forty-nine letters that make up my declaration of G-d's total and absolute Unity, together with the ‘one’ — the surrender and elevation of my own existence that joins me to ‘fifty’ — the Ultimate Existence.

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**Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum  
Parshas Ki Sisa**

**They have strayed quickly from the way that I have commanded them; they have made themselves a molten calf. (32:8)**

The eigel rebellion, in which a group of mutineers led the Jewish People to create a Golden Calf, is recognized as one of our people's darkest moments. What makes it more egregious is that it took place a mere forty days after they had accepted the Torah amid a resounding declaration of *Naase v'Nishma*, “We will do and we will listen!” In the Midrash Rabbah, Chazal compare this incident to a servant who has been given two very expensive goblets. “Please take great care with these goblets. They are very precious,” the king said to the servant. Understandably, the servant took great pains to take care of the goblets. Regrettably, as he walked into the palace carrying the goblets, a calf that was situated by the door gored the servant, causing him to drop one of the goblets. It shattered. The servant was beside himself

with fear of the king. He had no choice but to tell his master what had happened to one of his precious goblets. Shaking, he waited for the king's reply, “I gave you two goblets. Now one of them is gone. Take special care of the other one.” Likewise, Hashem told the Jewish People, “You poured two 'goblets' at Sinai - one for *Naase*, 'We will do'; and the other for *Nishma*, 'We will listen.' You have already lost one of them. Take great care not to lose the other.”

Two precious gifts became part of the nation's heritage: *naase*, representing mitzvah observance; and *nishma*, which is a reference to *limud*, study of Torah. When Bnei Yisrael sinned with *eigel ha'zahav*, they “broke” the *naase*. The gift of mitzvah observance was destroyed. Hashem said, “Be careful with the second!” Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, quotes from an *adam gadol*, distinguished Torah scholar that following the sin of the Golden Calf, the primary function and purpose of a Jew is to study Torah. No minute should pass devoid of Torah study. If we were to “lose” this second precious goblet, we would be “finished.”

Rav Pincus notes that this idea is quite evident in recent years, as young people have returned to their Jewish roots and embraced their heritage. *Shabbos*, *kashrus*, *Tefillin* and mitzvah observance, however, are not the end. If the people will not be availed opportunities for Torah study, there is a possibility that even the mitzvah observance will eventually wane. In order to maintain a *baal teshuvah's* spiritual consistency, to see to it that he completes his journey of return, one must see to it that Torah study is an integral part of his life. This is the essence of our relationship with Hashem, which extends to all Jews across the board. To focus on anything less is to court disaster.

This is how Jews of old lived. Their primary focus was Torah study, early in the morning, late at night; it was all about Torah study. It was their *geshmak*, sense of satisfaction. Veritably, there was little else - no sports, electronic media, be it for entertainment or “business.” They had their *Gemorah*. Thus, they needed little else. Were they “simple” Jews? We should be so simple.

**Yehoshua heard the sound of the people in its shouting, and he said to Moshe, “The sound of battle is in the camp.” (32:17)**

Moshe Rabbeinu could discern the true nature of the sounds that emanated from the Jewish camp. While Yehoshua thought it to be the people's response to an aggressive attack, Moshe, the quintessential leader, understood that the cacophony of sound was an indication that the people were actually enjoying their blatant rebellion against Hashem. Celebrating the blasphemous and immoral behavior which accompanied their worship of the molten calf conveyed to Moshe a depressing message: these people were enjoying their sinfulness. It is very difficult to bring about change in a person who rejoices and luxuriates in the filth of his iniquity.

This is one approach to understanding the shouting that came from the camp. Targum Yonasan ben Uziel writes: *Kad me'yabvin b'chedva kadam eglah*, “As they wailed with joy before the calf.” The choice of words *me'yabvin*, related to *yevavah*, wailing, seems misplaced. If they were having a “good time,” where does *yevavah* enter the picture? A *kol yevavah*, wailing sound, is used to describe the blowing of the *teruah* sound with the *Shofar*, an activity that does anything but catalyze joyful response.

The *Mirrer Mashgiach*, Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, derives a powerful lesson from here - one that we should reflect upon over and over. Anyone who has savored the taste of Torah, who has imbibed Torah lessons either during his youth in a *yeshivah* setting, a *bais medrash*, a *shul* - even if he later, Heaven forbid, were to reject his learning, his surroundings, his Torah-oriented life - will never fully appreciate a life of sin. The taste of sin, the taste for which some feel it is worth rejecting everything for which our people have lived and died, this taste will forever elude him. This is what Torah does for the one who learns it: it has destroyed the taste of sin. He will no longer enjoy his transgression. Something will always be tugging at him, reminding him: This is not for you; you are better than this. The question that presents itself is: How do we reconcile the *peshatim*, interpretations, which reflect two extreme perspectives on Klal Yisrael's sin? *Sforno* feels that the joy destroyed them. The debauchery accompanied with frivolity, the dancing and out-of-control lewd behavior,

sealed their fate. Targum Yonasan claims that they "wailed" joyfully. Their joy was not real. It was a "put on."

Perhaps we just view this pragmatically. Whenever someone does something wrong and deep down it bothers him, he manifests an air of indifference, even joy, to show that he does not care, but he is crying inside! I do not believe that those who, as a result of "circumstances," made poor choices in their lives, thus causing the alienation and eventual extinction of their future progeny from a life of Torah, are really proud of their decision. They cry bitter tears constantly! It is difficult to cry in public and proclaim publicly, "I erred. I was a fool." Instead, they laugh and romp. It is all a miserable facade. We may see what appears to be laughter, but they are really wailing.

**"Show me now Your Glory"... "You will see My back, but My face may not be seen." (Shemos 33:18, 23)**

The question: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" has plagued man from time immemorial. To the individual who does not believe in an All-good, Omniscient, and Omnipotent G-d, this question remains unanswered. If Hashem is not all-good, He could do evil and even enjoy inflicting it on others. If the Almighty is not Omniscient, bad things could easily occur, since He does not know everything that is taking place in the world which He created. Last, if G-d is not Omnipotent, then bad things could just happen, because forces exist in the world which are beyond His control. So, clearly, the believing Jew does not question things of this nature, because for him the Thirteen Principles of Faith, the Ani Maamin, is a reality, a verity of verities, which remains the bedrock of Jewish Faith. As the famous dictum goes, "For the believer, there are no questions. For the non-believer, there are no answers." With this premise in mind, we can take an intellectual approach to suffering, tragedy, and to all events which are beyond our ability to comprehend. The answers remain theoretical, since we truly must understand that no human being is able to understand Hashem's ways, nor should any human being expect a cognitive appreciation of Hashem. That idea undermines the very basis of humanity with its limited vision, versus the spiritual with its unlimited scope.

This does not mean that questioning is not good. On the contrary, one should question - himself. Events in our life are not random accidents. Indeed, the word coincidence does not belong in the lexicon of the believing Jew. The very notion of coincidence is heretical. If one believes in an All-knowing, All-powerful, All-good G-d, nothing, as the popular contemporary cliché declares, "just happens." Let me take a moment to share with the reader a fundamental truth expounded by Horav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, zl, in his Daas Tevunos. I paraphrase:

"One who believes in G-d's Oneness and understands its implications must believe that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is one, single, and unique Being, subject to no impediment or restraint whatsoever. He alone dominates all; there is no other beneath Him who exercises any dominion in the world. He alone supervises all of His creatures individually, and nothing transpires in this world except through His will and agency. There is no chance, no nature, no constellation. It is Hashem Who governs all of the earth and all that is in it. He alone decrees all that is to be done."

This perspective gives our life meaning, as it grants us the ability to accept that Hashem's guiding hand is an active part of our life. We are never alone, nor does something just happen. It is all from Hashem. Why? That is a question that, for the most part, we are unable to answer. The need to understand, demanding answers to every ambiguous situation, every question, suggests that the individual considers himself great enough to demand what he feels is his inherent right to be privy to G-d's Divine plan for the world. It does not work that way. Hashem owes us nothing; we owe Him everything. It is as simple as that. Our brains lack the capacity for understanding the ways of the Creator Who created us. As the Kotzker Rebbe, zl, was wont to say, "I could never believe in a G-d whom I could understand."

Living a life where everything is based upon good fortune, chance, or coincidence, reduces the meaningfulness of life. When we ignore Hashem's Divine messages, relegating them to coincidence, we are robbing ourselves of meaning, inspiration, and the ability to maximize our potential. Hashem "talks" to us constantly. At times, it is a subtle message, while at other

times it is a powerful wake-up call. When we ignore His call by saying it was bad fortune, we waste our greatest opportunity for spiritual growth and closeness with Hashem.

We are all here for a purpose, to carry out our own personal mission. We are part of a large picture, a collective destiny, all fitting together in one tapestry of events as a component of Hashem's Divine plan for the perfection of the world. One day we will all be privy to clarity of vision, when the veils of ambiguity will be lifted, and we will see that what we thought was "bad" was inherently "good", and what was perceived as chastisement and tribulation were actually the precursors and evolution of blessing.

It is with the above in mind, that I return to our stated pasuk in which Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem, Hareini na es Kevedecha, "Show me now Your Glory," to which Hashem responded, "Behold there is a place near Me; you may stand on the rock. When My glory passes by, I shall place you in a cleft of the rock; I shall shield you with My hand until I have passed. Then I shall remove My hand - V'raissa es Achorai, u'panai lo yeirau - "and you will see My back, but My face may not be seen" (33:21-23).

The Chasam Sofer explains Moshe's request, and Hashem's reply, allegorically. Moshe was asking the age-old question: "Why are there righteous who suffer and wicked people who prosper?" This question has befuddled the minds of many as they seek an answer to a question that can only be elucidated from a vantage point beyond the human realm of cognition. Hashem replied, "My face cannot be seen - I can only be seen from the back." What does this mean? Chasam Sofer explains that seeing Hashem's face up front is an allusion to understanding life's events as they take place. Man is incapable of understanding an event while it is happening. Thus, the idea of the righteous suffering while the wicked prosper is an anomaly beyond man's ability to grasp. Only when man "stands with G-d" and has an all-encompassing perspective of the entirety of history - from the beginning of time, until the End of Days - will he have the ability to comprehend things in context, and then appreciate everything that Hashem did. "Seeing from the back" is a reference to hindsight. Only in retrospect can man have the clarity of vision to see and understand. To expect it all now - in the present - is nonsensical. To make theological decisions based upon one's current perspective is heretical.

Horav Yissocher Frand cites the Kol Arye in the introduction to his Teshuvos, Responsa, where the author elaborates on this subject, availing us greater insight and inspiration: As Yaakov Avinu was about to descend to Egypt, Hashem appeared to him and said, "I am G-d, G-d of your father. Have no fear of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up; and Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes" (Bereishis 46:3, 4). The Zohar makes a cryptic comment concerning the words, "And Yosef shall place his hand on your eyes." He says, "This is what the secret of Krias Shema is all about."

In order to give meaning to the Zohar, Kol Arye cites Chazal in the Talmud Pesachim 50a who make the following statement: Rav Acha bar Chanina distinguishes between This World and Olam Haba, the World to Come - the world of truth. In This World when one hears good news, he recites the blessing of Ha'tov u'meitiv, "Blessed is the One Who is good and does good." If he hears bad news, he blesses, Dayon Ha'Emes, "the True Judge." In the World to Come, regardless of the tidings, the blessing is always Ha'tov u'meitiv, "Who is good and does good." This, explain Chazal, is the meaning of the pasuk in Zechariah 14:9, V'hayah Hashem l'Melech al kol ha'aretz; ba'yom hahu, yiheyeh Hashem Echad u'Shemo Echad, "And Hashem will be King over the entire world; on that day His Name will be One and He will be One."

In his commentary Tzlach, to Meseches Pesachim, Horav Yechezkel Landau, explains that life in This World is fraught with what appears to us both as "bad" and conversely, as "good" tidings. While we pray for events that are filled with joy and hope, nonetheless, we are privy to events that are tragic and heartbreaking. A Jew must believe that ultimately everything is for the good. Indeed, tzaddikim, the righteous, throughout the millennia have uttered the words Gam zu l'tovah, "This is also for the best." I

underscore the tzaddikim, because this is not the attitude of the average Jew. For most of us, we see "bad" and "good." It takes enormous conviction to view what clearly appears as "bad" through the prism of optimism and positiveness. In The World to Come, it will make sense as our perspective widens and deepens, creating a clarity of vision that in This World, with its restrictions of time, make it impossible to perceive. Then, it will all be good, allowing us to declare, without reservation, the blessing of Ha'tov u'meitiv, for all occurrences.

The belief that Hashem always does good is the underlying message of the Krias Shema. Our most seminal prayer, the prayer which connotes our kabbolas ol Malchus Shomayim, acceptance of the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom, and the last words a Jew utters prior to leaving This World, is the Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad. This declaration of the unity of G-d, tells it all. How?

The Name Hashem - Yud, Kay, Vav, Kay - has a different connotation than the name Elokim, with the latter reflecting the Almighty acting as the Divine Judge, applying the Attribute of Din, Strict Justice, and the former reflecting Middas HaRachamim, Divine Mercy. Thus, the Shema Yisrael prayer expresses the belief that: Hear O' Yisrael, Hashem = Mercy and Elokeinu = Justice are one, echad - one and the same! We have one G-d. He sometimes appears merciful, and other times acts like a strict judge. But, how do we ignore the bad, the tragic, the painful? How do we overlook the depressing, the heartbreaking, the nerve-shattering experiences of life? We cover our eyes. We do this so we will not see the various troubles appearing right before our eyes, so that we can affirm our faith - attesting to our full conviction in the unity of G-d - without any impediment. At least symbolically, we do not see the tribulations before us. The Kol Arye uses Yosef's experience as an example of this verity. His life, albeit miserable for many years, ended on a high point. Upon looking back in retrospect, Yosef was able to say, it was all "good"! Thus Hashem told Yaakov, "Do not fear descending into Egypt, with the doom and gloom of the upcoming exile overshadowing your every move. Yosef will place his hands over your eyes." This is the secret of the Krias Shema. We see from Yosef that it all works out - that "Hashem" and "Elokeinu" are One. But, what about the present tragedy - "cover your eyes."

After all is said and done, what does the individual who is not yet on the spiritual plateau of belief that everything is inherently good - do? If one cannot believe - he should attempt to at least learn from the experience. Transform tragedy into hope. When bad things happen, apply them to sensitize yourself to the plight of others. Rather than live with the compelling question of "Why?" one should say, "I will not succumb to this misery. Instead, I will reach out to others." Everything that occurs happens for a purpose. There are no spiritual vacuums. Seize the opportunities to turn tragedy into triumph and hope, and to strengthen one's affirmation of belief in Hashem.

#### **Hashem, Hashem G-d, Merciful and Compassionate, Slow to Anger, and Abundant in Kindness and Truth. (34:6)**

When Klal Yisrael stood at the foot of Har Sinai, they pledged their eternal devotion to Hashem with their seminal declaration of Naase v'Nishma, "We will do and we will listen!" Their obedience to the Almighty and His Torah was affirmed and ratified with these words. Alas, forty days later, they broke their trust by betraying their promise, instead offering their allegiance to a molten calf of their own creation. This marked the nadir of disloyalty. Hashem stated His wish to put an end to this recalcitrant people. Such people did not deserve a commutation of Hashem's desired decree. Moshe Rabbeinu's impassioned pleas on their behalf brought about a second chance for his nascent nation. Hashem turned His anger to mercy. The climax of the pardon came as Hashem passed before Moshe and revealed to him the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, Yud Gimel Middos Shel Rachamim.

Chazal describe the scene and ensuing dialogue. The Talmid Rosh Hashanah 17a states, "Rabbi Yochanan said: The Torah teaches us that Hashem wrapped Himself in a Tallis like a chazzan and showed Moshe the order of the prayer. Hashem said to him, 'Whenever Yisrael sins, let them perform this order of service and I will forgive them...'" Chazal continue

with the notion that a covenant has been struck that the Thirteen Attributes are never turned back unanswered.

The Brisker Rav, zl, explains the nature of this covenant. He explains that it is as if Hashem had gathered an enormous cache of mercy. Hashem would forever withdraw "mercy" from this treasure trove. Thus, whatever was needed to respond to Klal Yisrael's invocation of the Thirteen Attributes would be available for disbursement. Therefore, when a plea for mercy is accompanied with the Yud Gimel Middos, it is answered because there is ample supply of mercy available for those in need.

Obviously, there is more to the meaning of the Yud Gimel Middos and their exceptional powers than meets the eye. The Reishis Chochmah, Shaar Ha'Anavah observes that Hashem was deliberate in saying Yaasu lefanai, "Let them perform before Me" this order or service. He did not say Yomru lefanai, "Let them say before Me." Simple recitation of the Thirteen Attributes will not effect Divine pardon. A Jew must act in accordance with Hashem's Attributes. He must follow in His ways: Ma Hu Rachum - Af atah rachum - "As He is merciful, so shall you be merciful." In their relationship with their fellow man, they must conduct themselves with a degree of mercy worthy of Hashem's Divine mercy. Thus, the Yud Gimel Middos serve as a map, offering directions on how a Jew should emulate the Almighty.

The Shalah HaKadosh (Shaar HaOsios) perceives man's fulfillment of the Yud Gimel Middos as a cardinal act of faith. He demonstrates how the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy correspond with the Thirteen Attributes of Faith. The individual who melds his entire being in consonance with the Heavenly model/standard of mercy achieves an unprecedented level of emunah, faith, in the Almighty.

Thus, if someone were to insult, degrade, humiliate, curse him, he should accept this degradation with love. The realization that the offender is nothing more than Hashem's Agent - who is acting out a mission to cleanse and purify him from past sins - makes this humiliating experience not only palatable, but embracing.

Mah Hu - Af atah. "As He is - so should you be." Forgiveness takes incredible resolution and strength of character. At times, the reluctance to "bury the hatchet," so to speak, stems from one's desire to save face, to exact some form of revenge. This is especially true when the damage inflicted is traumatic, emotional, when someone has humiliated him in such a manner in which the hurt remains, the pain perseveres. If someone is not forgiving, does it make him a miserable person, an unworthy person? So he is not G-d-like! Is that not why G-d is G-d, and we are but human beings, subject to human frailty?

I came across a story that puts it all into perspective. The dichotomy between man and the Divine is an unfathomable gap, but, if one does not make the attempt to close this aperture by emulating the Divine, well, he should not personally expect treatment that is any different from the one he renders to others.

A talmid chacham, Torah scholar of note, was deeply humiliated by a member of the community in which he lived. The hurt was overwhelming, the pain staggering. This was a scholar who was a fine, unassuming individual, but this was an exceptional situation - or so he felt. A few days after the incident, he received a note from the offender expressing his regret, claiming that he had "lost it" and gone too far. Could the scholar find it in his heart the ability to forgive him? The scholar was too hurt to even continue reading the note. So many things went through his mind, as he remembered the humiliation, the emotional pain that had accompanied him wherever he went. There was no way he could - or would - forgive the offender, regardless of how many notes he would send. This was an infraction that he simply could not ignore. As he was about to tear up the note and place it in its "rightful" place in the wastebasket, his wife interceded. He was blessed with a wise woman who was less emotionally involved in this incident, affording a perspective variant to that of her husband. "Do not tear up the note!" she said. "Save it and place it between the pages of your Siddur. During Shemonah Esrai, when you stand in supplication before Hashem, reciting the blessing of S'lach lanu Avinu, ki chatanu, m'chal lanu Malkeinu, ki fashanu. "Forgive us, Our Father, for we have sinned; Pardon us, our King, for we have sinned willfully," remove

the note and say to Hashem, "Ribbono Shel Olam, Master of the world, it is so difficult for me to forgive and forget the emotional distress which someone caused me. I have suffered indescribable pain as a result of his iniquity; yet, I found it in my heart to forgive him b'lev shaleim, with a complete heart. I went against my innate nature, because it was the correct thing to do. Therefore, I ask You, Hashem, to likewise forgive me for my sins and transgressions."

When someone hurts us, our relationship with Hashem is probably the last thing that comes to our mind. It should not be. Emulating Hashem means just that. We should expect no less from ourselves than that for which we entreat Hashem.

**L'Keil Baruch neimos yiteinu. Hu levado po'el gevuros.**

**They give forth sweet melodies in praise of Him Whom they have defined as Baruch... He alone performs mighty deeds.**

Applying Horav Shimon Schwab's zl, interpretation of this prayer is both meaningful and practical. We have explained that the previous declaration made by the malachim was one of awe, in which they see the Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh of Hashem's indescribable holiness come into the proximity of mimkomo, His place. How do we reconcile these two descriptions: Hashem far removed; Hashem extending His Divinity further from wherever He is, so that He comes closer and closer to His creations - both spiritual and physical? The brachah of Yotzer Ohr continues with a description of the unique perception these spiritual creatures have of Hashem, Whom they now describe as Baruch. The term Baruch, as taken from Baruch kavod Hashem mimkomo, is a reference to Hashem's close proximity to His creations, and how this relates to the physical world.

The malachim begin with a recognition that Hu levado po'el gevuros, the mighty deeds, inventions and achievements of the human race throughout time are all the result of Hashem. Man is merely an instrument. Hashem has granted man the intelligence, the energy, the drive, the ingenuity to conquer the physical, so that we may execute the act. The ability to perform that execution and everything that is its precursor originates with Hashem.

l'zechar nishmas our husband, father, grandfather HaRav Daniel ben HaRav Avraham Aryeh Leib Schur Horav Doniel Schur Z"L nifter 21 Adar 5766 t.n.tz.v.h. sponsored by his wife, sons, daughters and all his family

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**Person in the Parsha**

**Rabbi Weinreb's Torah Column, Parshat Ki Tisa**

*Sponsored in memory of Nathan and Louise Schwartz a"h*

**"The Hindu Princess and the Golden Calf"**

She was a Hindu princess. She was one of the brightest students in my graduate school class. We studied psychology, and she went on to return to her country and become a psychotherapist of world renown. For our purposes, I shall refer to her as Streena.

We were a class of 12, and except for one lapsed Catholic, she and I were the only ones who had a serious interest in religion. And we were the only ones who actively practiced our faith.

This was back in the days when religion was far from a popular subject in psychology departments. Religion was seen as foolish, at best, and as quite possibly a sign of neurotic pathology. So neither of us was very public about our religious practices.

In the early afternoons, when the time for the Mincha service rolled around, I would usually find an excuse to absent myself from the psychology department library where our group hung out. There was a small synagogue not far from the campus, and I would make my way there and unobtrusively return to the library when Mincha was over.

But there were times when it was impossible for me to leave the building. During those times, I would make use of a small side room and pray in private.

It was during one of those times that I discovered that I was not the only one to use that side room for prayers. Streena was there too.

I remember the first time I noticed her there. I had just taken the customary three steps back after concluding my Amidah, or Shemoneh Esrei. She was in the far corner of the room, doing her utmost not to disturb me. She was deep in prayer herself, but what was most striking was that she had small object in her hand.

When it was apparent to me that she too had concluded her prayers, I approached her and inquired about that object. She showed me what looked like a small doll, only she referred to it by a Hindu name that meant that it was her deity, her God. Plainly and simply, it was an idol.

Over our years in graduate school, we had numerous conversations about religion, the nature of prayer, and of course the nature of the divinity. I stressed that when I as a Jew prayed, I did not pray to any image, statue or portrait. I prayed to an invisible and unknowable God. She found that impossible to accept. "When I pray," she insisted, "I must have some concrete visual image before me. I know that this little doll is not the deity. But it is what I call a concretization of the higher power that I worship."

The stark contrast between Streena's mode of prayer and my Jewish conception of the way in which we are to conceive the Almighty is one of the lessons of an exceedingly provocative episode in this week's Torah portion, Ki Tisa (Exodus 30:11-34:35). I refer to story of the Golden Calf. Moses ascends the mountain to receive the holy tablets. He is delayed in his return, and, in their impatience, the Jewish people collect gold, fashion an idol out of it in the shape of a calf, and worship it with sacrifices and an orgiastic feast.

Every reader of the Torah has been puzzled by the sudden descent of the people from a state of lofty spiritual anticipation to the degrading scene of dancing worshipfully before a graven image.

One such reader, himself a pagan, was the king of the Khazars, a nation in Central Asia, whose search for religious truth is the theme of one of the most intriguing books of Jewish philosophy, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi's Kuzari.

In that king's dialogue with the Jewish sage who is his spiritual mentor, he condemns this behavior and challenges the sage to justify the apparent idolatry of the Jewish people. The sage, who is actually the voice of the author of the Kuzari, responds, in part:

"In those days, every people worshiped images... This is because they would focus their attention upon the image, and profess to the masses that divinity attaches itself to the image... We do something like this today when we treat certain places with special reverence - we will even consider the soil and rocks of these places as sources of blessing... The objective was to have some tangible item that they could focus upon... Their intent was not to deny the God who took them out of Egypt; rather, it was to have something in front of them upon which they could concentrate when recounting God's wonders... We do the same thing when we ascribe divinity to the skies (for example, we call fear of God 'fear of heaven')..."

This is but one explanation of the motivation for what is one of the greatest recorded sins of our people. But it is an especially instructive explanation, for it renders understandable, in our own terms, an act that is otherwise totally mystifying.

In our own inner experiences of prayer, we have all struggled with the difficulty of "knowing before Whom we stand". It is frustrating to address an abstract, invisible, and unknowable deity. It is comforting to imagine that we stand before a mortal king, or a flesh and blood father figure, someone physical and real. I think that we can all confess to moments when we have, at least in our visualizations of the Almighty, resorted to the same process of concretization as Streena did.

Ideally, we know that we must resist the temptation to "humanize" God, to anthropomorphize Him. We believe in a deity Who sees but is not seen, hears but is not heard, and who is as far from human ken as heaven is from Earth. In this fundamental belief, we differ from other religions; and indeed not only from Hinduism but from certain forms of Christianity as well.

Nevertheless, we can sympathize with Streena's need to pray to her doll, and in the process we can come to grips with what must have been going on in the minds of our ancestors when they stooped to idolatry and committed the sin which the Almighty has never totally forgiven, the worship of the Golden Calf.

### The Birth of a New Freedom

Witnessing the birth of a new idea is a little like watching the birth of a galaxy through the Hubble Space Telescope. We can witness just such an event in a famous rabbinical commentary to a key verse in this week's parsha.

The way to see it is to ask the question: what is the Hebrew word for freedom? Instinctively, we answer cherut. After all, we say that God brought us me-avdut le-cherut, "from slavery to freedom." We call Pesach, the Festival of freedom, zeman cherutenu. So it comes as a surprise to discover that not once does the Torah, or Tanakh as a whole, use the word cherut in the sense of freedom, and only once does it use the word, or at least the related word charut, in any sense whatever.

There are two biblical words for freedom. One is chofshi/chofesh, used in connection with the freeing of slaves (as in Ex. 21: 2). That too is the word used in Israel's national anthem, Hatikva, which speaks about "the two-thousand-year hope to be a free people [am chofshi] in our land."

The other is dror, used in connection with the Jubilee year, engraved on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia: "Proclaim liberty [dror] throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (Lev. 25: 10). The same word appears in Isaiah's great words: "to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom [dror] for the captives" (Is. 61: 1).

However, the sages coined a new word. Here is the passage in which it occurs:

It says, "The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved [charut] on the tablets" (Ex. 32:16). Read not charut, "engraved" but cherut, "freedom," for the only person who is truly free is one who occupies himself with Torah study. (Avot 6: 2).

The reference is to the first tablets given by God to Moses just before the sin of the golden calf. This is the only appearance in Tanakh of root ch-r-t (with a tav), but a related word, ch-r-t (with a tet) appears in the story of the golden calf itself, when the Torah tells us that Aaron shaped it with a cheret, an "engraving tool." The Egyptian magicians are called chartumim, which may mean "engravers of hieroglyphics." So how did a word that means "engraved" come to mean "freedom"?

Besides which, why was a new term for freedom needed? If the Hebrew language already had two, why was a third necessary? And why this word – engraved? To answer these questions, let us engage in some conceptual archaeology.

Chofesh/chofshi is what a slave becomes when he or she goes free. It means that he can do what he likes. There is no one to order him around. The word is related to chafetz, "desire" and chapess, "seek". Chofesh is the freedom to pursue your desires. It is what philosophers call negative liberty. It means the absence of coercion.

Chofesh is fine for individual freedom. But it does not constitute collective freedom. A society in which everyone was free to do what they liked would not be a free society. It would be, at best, like the society we saw on the streets of London and Manchester in the summer of 2011, with people breaking shop windows, looting and assaulting strangers.

More likely it would be what failed states are today: a society without the rule of law, with no effective government, honest police, or independent courts. It would be what Hobbes called "the war of every man against every man" in which life would be "nasty, brutish and short." Something like this is referred to in the last verse of the book of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did that which was right in his own eyes."

A free society needs law. But law is a constraint on freedom. It forbids me to do something I might wish to do. How then are we to reconcile law and liberty? That is a question at the heart of Judaism – which is a religion of both law and liberty.

To answer this, the sages made an extraordinary leap of the imagination. Consider two forms of writing in ancient times. One is to use ink on

parchment, another is to engrave words in stone. There is a marked difference between these two methods.

The ink and parchment are two different materials. The ink is external to the parchment. It is superimposed upon it, and it does not become part of the parchment. It remains distinct, and so it can be rubbed off and removed. But an engraving does not use some new substance. It is carved out of the stone itself. It becomes part of it, and cannot easily be obliterated.

Now consider these two ways of writing as metaphors for law. There is a law that is externally imposed. People keep it because they fear that if they do not, they will be caught and punished. But if there is no chance that they will be caught, they make break it, for the law has not changed their desires. That kind of law – imposed on us like ink on parchment – is a limitation of freedom.

But there can be a different kind of society in which people keep the law not because they fear they will be caught and punished, but because they know the law, they have studied it, they understand it, they have internalised it, and it has become part of who they are. They no longer desire to do what the law forbids because they now know it is wrong and they wrestle with their own temptations and desires. Such a law needs no police because it is based not on external force but on internal transformation through the process of education. The law is like writing engraved in stone.

Imagine such a society. You can walk in the streets without fear. You don't need high walls and alarms to keep your home safe. You can leave your car unlocked and still expect to find it there when you return. People keep the law because they care about the common good. That is a free society.

Now imagine the other kind of society, which needs a heavy police presence, constant surveillance, neighbourhood watch schemes, security devices and personnel, and still people are afraid to walk alone at night. People think they are free because they have been taught that all morality is relative, and you can do what you like so long as you do not harm others. No one who has seen such a society can seriously believe it is free. Individuals may be free, but society as a whole has to be on constant guard because it is at constant risk. It is a society with little trust and much fear.

Hence the brilliant new concept that emerged in rabbinic Judaism: cherut, the freedom that comes to a society – of which Jews were called on to be pioneers – where people not only know the law but study it constantly until it is engraved on their hearts as the commandments were once engraved on stone. That is what the sages meant when they said, "Read not charut, engraved, but cherut, freedom, for the only person who is truly free is one who occupies himself with Torah study." In such a society you keep the law because you want to, because having studied the law you understand why it is there. In such a society there is no conflict between law and freedom.

Where did the sages get this idea from? I believe it came from their deep understanding of what Jeremiah meant when he spoke of the renewed covenant that would come into being once Jews returned after the Babylonian exile. The renewed covenant "will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt ... This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time – declares the Lord – I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts ..." (Jer. 31: 31-33).

Many centuries later Josephus recorded that this had actually happened. "Should anyone of our nation be asked about our laws, he will repeat them as readily as his own name. The result of our thorough education in our laws from the very dawn of intelligence is that they are, as it were, engraved on our souls."

To this day many still do not fully understand this revolutionary idea. People still think that a free society can be brought about simply by democratic elections and political structures. But democracy, as Alexis de Tocqueville said long ago, may simply turn out to be "the tyranny of the majority."

Freedom is born in the school and the House of Study. That is the freedom still pioneered by the people who, more than any other, have devoted their time to studying, understanding and internalising the law. What is the Jewish people? A nation of constitutional lawyers. Why? Because only

when the law is engraved on our souls can we achieve collective freedom without sacrificing individual freedom. That is cherut – Judaism's great contribution to the idea and practice of liberty.

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## Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Ki Sisa

### Moshe Does Not Let Betrayal Infringe on His Love For The People

The Baal HaTurim points out in last week's Parsha (Titzaveh) that Moshe Rabbeinu's name is not mentioned there by virtue of the fact that in this week's Parsha Moshe prays "Please blot me out from the Book you have written." [Shmos 32:32] This is a fulfillment of the rule that the "curse of a wise man comes true even if made conditionally." Thus, Parshas Titzaveh became the only parsha in the final four books of the Torah in which Moshe's name is not mentioned -- it is "blotted out" so to speak.

There is irony in the fact that Parshas Titzaveh always comes out on the week which contains Moshe Rabbeinu's Yahrzeit [death-anniversary], Adar 7 and is the only Parsha after Vayechi in which Moshe's name is not mentioned.

However, as we have said in the past, the fact that Moshe's name is left out of Titzaveh is not a punishment -- it is a "price". If anything, this fact is a "zechus" -- a bonus due to his merit. It is a testimony to his leadership and self-sacrifice in behalf of the nation. It calls our attention to the fact that he was willing to have his name blotted out from the Torah in order to save the Jewish people, presenting an ultimatum, as it were, to the Almighty that He must forgive them!

Rather than being a punishment, the fact that Moshe is not mentioned in Titzaveh is the highest form of praise of Moshe Rabbeinu.

This week's parsha contains another example of Moshe's devotion to his people. Moshe's "delay" in returning to the camp from the 40 day period he spent on Mt. Sinai receiving the Torah caused a panic among the people and led to them building a Golden Calf to replace Moshe. Hashem indicated to Moshe that He wanted to destroy the people. Moshe pleaded on behalf of Klal Yisrael and again they were forgiven.

Let us pose the following question: What if we were in Moshe Rabbeinu's shoes? Say we had been on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights without a drink of water or a morsel of bread to eat. This was total self-sacrifice. We come down to the nation and we see them joyously dancing around a Golden Calf -- spiritual destruction!

The people thought Moshe was dead. However, if Moshe was "dead" in their minds -- how long ago could it have been that they came to this conclusion? It had to be a matter of hours at most! How could they be dancing around at this juncture? Where is the period of mourning for the loss of their faithful leader who led them out of Egypt?

There is an English expression -- "The body isn't cold yet!" -- and already they dance? What kind of business is this? The ingratitude demonstrated here is unbelievable! This is almost more shocking than the fact that they are worshipping an idol in the first place!

Keeping this in mind, we can picture how Moshe Rabbeinu must have felt. So when the Almighty comes to Moshe and tells him, "Moshe, I am going to destroy the people and I will make you into a great nation," Moshe's response should have been "You're right! These are a bunch of ingrates! They don't even have the decency for a minimal period of mourning. They should be wiped out!"

However, that is not Moshe's reaction. Moshe begs for forgiveness on their behalf and issues a bold ultimatum to the Almighty. "And if not, blot me out from the Book you have written." This is an unbelievably great Jewish leader.

There is only one type of relationship in which a person can act that way and get away with it. That is the relationship between a parent and a child. Even with a husband and wife -- when one is disloyal the relationship is destroyed. However, a parent can take almost anything from a child. They may get upset for a while, but then they come right back. This in fact is spelled out in Chumash: "Like the nursemaid carries the suckling child" [Bamidbar 11:12] -- such is the relationship between a Jewish leader and Klal Yisrael.

Rav Simcha Wasserman zt"l once made an interesting comment. In many places, the Talmud uses the expression "the spirit of the Rabbis are not pleased with him" (Ayn ruach Chachomim noche heimenu). In these places, the Talmud is not talking about real aveiyros [sins], but rather things which "do not give "nachas" [pleasure of spirit] to the Rabbis, so to speak." Normally, when we speak of "nachas," we are speaking of something that our children give us when we are proud of them. Why is this term used in conjunction with the Rabbis' reaction to the actions of the people? The answer, said Rav Simcha Wasserman, is that the relationship between parents and children is the same relationship as the relationship between the Sages of Israel and the nation. The Rabbis say "these are our children!" "I have nachas from them (when they act appropriately)". However, when the people do certain other things, "Ayn ruach Chachomim noche heimenu" – the Rabbis do not get nachas from their "children".

#### **Either One Is "Designated" or One is Not Designated**

Rav Simcha Wasserman's father, Rav Elchonon Wasserman once made the following insight on a Friday night on Parshas Ki Sisa. Rav Elchonon Wasserman was in America on a fundraising trip for the Baronovich Yeshiva, which he headed. He gave a pitch for his Yeshiva in a shul in America on Friday night, Parshas Ki Sisa. Rav Elchonon announced "For eighty dollars, a person will have the merit of supporting the Yeshiva for one week." In the 1930s, \$80 went a long way in Baronovich. Rav Elchonon gave a passionate appeal and the people were becoming inspired by his message and were ready to contribute most generously.

However, the Rabbi of the congregation was not that enthused about having his members write checks for \$80 for the Baronovich Yeshiva. He too got up to speak that same evening after Rav Elchonon. The congregation Rabbi spoke at length and the whole atmosphere which Rav Elchonon had created started to dissipate. The congregation Rabbi's punchline was "even if you give a single dollar to the Baronovich Yeshiva -- that itself is a significant donation."

Obviously, the wind had been let out of the balloon of the impassioned speech that the Rosh Yeshiva had given. Rav Elchonon's yeshiva received next to nothing from that community. That night, the Rav went to the house where Rav Elchonon was staying and said to him, "I know you probably are upset about what happened this evening. You probably have complaints against me and my congregation."

Rav Elchonon told him, "I have no complaints. Let's look at this week's Parsha. The Torah states: 'Behold I have designated by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Chur.' He is the fellow who is supposed to build the Mishkan. How was Moshe supposed to find this fellow Bezalel out of two million people in the camp? If he went from person to person asking, 'Are you Bezalel ben Uri ben Chur?' When someone responded negatively, would Moshe have any complaints against him? Obviously no! He was not Bezalel so he was not the one who was designated by G-d to build the Mishkan. It is not a matter of being offended by the fact -- it's just that he was not THAT person.

Likewise, the Ribono shel Olam said that the Baronovich Yeshiva will have supporters. Who are they? Not your shul. Not you. So you are not Bezalel, but I cannot have complaints against you. It is just obvious that you are not the person or the community that G-d has designated to build my Yeshiva in Baronovich. Someone else will have that merit in the World To Come. I cannot be upset that this person is to be found elsewhere and not here in your community.

One needs to have a Zechus [Merit] to be able to give to an appropriate institution. If one does not have that zechus, it is not the collector's problem and he should not feel upset about it.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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#### **Rabbi Yonason Sacks (The TorahWeb Foundation) V'asu Li Mikdash**

While the Beis HaMikdash served multiple roles, the Rambam (Sefer HaMitzvos, mitvas aseh 20) seems to identify the ritualistic role as

paradigmatic of the very essence of the Mikdash. He describes the Mikdash as a Beis Avodah - a House of Service. We find that the Rambam echoes this characterization in the beginning of Hilchos Avodas Beis HaBechirah, where he states that Bnei Yisrael are commanded, "Laasos bayis l'Hashem muchan lihiyosm makrivim bo korbanos v'chogugin eilav shalosh p'amim bashanah shene'emar v'asu Li mikdash - to build a house for Hashem, equipped to offer sacrifices and celebrate festivals three times annually, as it is stated, 'make for Me a Mikdash.'" By mentioning the sacrificial obligations in the very opening line, the Rambam suggests that these ritual services encapsulate the characteristic essence of the Mikdash.

The Ramban (beginning of Parshas Terumah), however, appears to present a somewhat different characterization of the Mikdash. Rather than emphasizing the particularistic rituals, the Ramban underscores the Mikdash's more general role as a resting place for the Divine Presence. In this respect, the Ramban suggests a relationship between the Mishkan and Har Sinai, as the Mishkan served to perpetuate the unparalleled level of closeness to the Divine Presence achieved at Har Sinai.

This divergence of opinions between the Rambam and the Ramban may also be reflected elsewhere. In the Sefer HaMitzvos (ibid), the Ramban reckons both the construction of the actual Mikdash as well as the construction of its keilim (vessels used to perform the services) as a single positive commandment. The Ramban (mitvas aseh 33) argues that the construction of the Keilim should be counted independently of the construction of the actual edifice. Therefore, he prefers to count it as a "hechsher mitzvah" subsumed under the general Mitzvah of the avodah. The Ramban adduces support for his argument from the halachic permissibility to offer sacrifices in the Beis HaMikdash, even in the absence of keilim. This dispensation suggests an independent status for the Mikdash, irrespective of the Mitzvah to build keilim.

Rav Asher Weiss suggests that the Rambam and Ramban's dispute regarding the counting of the mitzvos mirrors their general dispute about the nature of the Mikdash. Because the Rambam perceives the avodah as central to the very definition of the Mikdash, he views the construction of the keilim (which are necessary to perform the avodah) as intrinsic to the commandment to build a Mikdash itself. According to the Ramban, however, the Mikdash maintains an independent purpose of housing the Divine Presence, regardless of the requirement to build keilim for the avodah. Hence, the Mitzvah to build the keilim deserves independent recognition from the Mitzvah to construct the Mikdash.

Rav Weiss suggests a further consistency in the opinions of the Rambam and Ramban. The Ramban (Mitzvos SheShachach HaRav, 3) counts an independent mitzvah of "u'vechol asher amarti aleichem tishameiru" (Shemos 23:13), not to deviate from the prescribed order when first placing the keilim in the Mikdash. The Rambam, however, does not reckon this commandment independently among the 613. Because the Ramban understands the construction of the keilim as a distinct Mitzvah from construction of the Mikdash, he must count an additional Mitzvah to teach the order of placement of the keilim. The Ramban, however, considers the construction of the Mikdash and its keilim to be a unified Mitzvah. Hence, the order in which the keilim must be placed in the Mikdash would likely be included within this Mitzvah as well, and not need to be reckoned independently.

It is noteworthy that, somewhat ironically, the Ramban's reckoning of "u'vechol asher amarti aleichem tishameiru" as an independent mitzvah may actually support the Rambam's understanding of the construction of the keilim. If construction of the keilim constitutes part of the biblical mitzvah of v'asu Li mikdash, it is understandable that the Torah should insist on a specific order in which the Mitzvah should be performed. According to the Ramban, as we have stated, construction of the keilim is not a true Mitzvah, but merely a hechsher mitzvah, a technical preparation necessary for the fulfillment of a Mitzvah. If constructing the keilim simply serves as a means to an end, perhaps the Torah would not be quite as insistent on the order in which it is performed.

A similar model can be gleaned from the mitzvah of donning the priestly vestments. The Rambam (Sefer HaMitzvos ibid) reckons the act of donning the vestments as an independent mitzvah. In analyzing the

Rambam's opinion, the Minchas Chinuch (n.99) posits that although there is a mitzvah to dress in the garments, there is perhaps no mitzvah to don the garments in any particular order (aside from the pants, which the Torah stipulates must be donned first). However, perhaps one could question the conclusion of the Minchas Chinuch. If donning the garments served merely as a preparatory step to facilitate the mitzvah of avodah, then one could certainly envision that the order could be insignificant. As long as all of the garments are eventually donned, the stated purpose has been achieved, regardless of their order. If, however, the act of donning constitutes an independent mitzvah, perhaps one would be required to follow a specific protocol of halachos regarding the order of the garments, as is the case with all mitzvos.

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### **Parshat Ki Tisa**

#### **A Trustworthy Servant**

**Rabbi Yossef Carmel (From "Chemdat Yamim"  
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*Dedicated to the memory ofb R' Meir b"r Yechezkel  
Shraga Brachfeld zt"l*

After being given at Mara and "featured" prominently at matan Torah, Shabbat is mentioned in this week's parasha (Shemot 31:17) and next week's. We will try to understand these mentions and Moshe Rabbeinu's connection to Shabbat with the help of the Shabbat morning tefilla: "Moshe will rejoice with the giving of his portion, for a trustworthy servant You called him; a crown of grandeur You gave to him, when he stood before You at Mount Sinai; two tablets of stone he brought down in his hand, and it was written in them the guarding of Shabbat."

When Hashem contemplated destroying Am Yisrael, Moshe rose to the occasion, willing to sacrifice his interests to save them. The pasuk says: "If You will bear their sin; and if not, erase me from the book that You wrote" (ibid. 32:32). Our parasha also relates that when Moshe came down from the mountain, his face glowed (ibid. 34: 29, 35). Let us now summarize the historical progression of the time. Moshe began his leadership of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt while they were still slaves. The first step in their liberation was to convince Paroh to give them a weekly day of rest - on Shabbat. This was not merely a respite from work but a break from physicality, enabling them to concentrate on spirituality. Upon becoming leader, Moshe actually became "a slave to the holy nation." He thereby taught the nation the notion that pushing off personal needs for the needs of the collective is uplifting. The height of Moshe's servitude to the nation is what we mentioned, that he was willing to be wiped out of Hashem's book on the people's behalf.

The first commandment about Shabbat came after the Torah was given at Sinai, and it gave a spiritual significance to the exodus. However, the sin of the Golden Calf, which was the wrong type of servitude, put into question the centrality of spirituality in the nation's life. Moshe's willingness to sacrifice ensured Hashem's forgiveness. First, his shining countenance was a sign to all that he was a trustworthy servant. Also, Bnei Yisrael received again the gift of Shabbat, which was accompanied in the second tablets with the command of shamor (guard).

We now return to the Shabbat tefilla. "Moshe will rejoice with the giving of his portion (the gift of the original Shabbat in Egypt and his acceptance of his mission), for a trustworthy servant (of the nation) You called him; a crown of grandeur You gave to him (the shining face), when he stood before You at Mount Sinai (begging for the nation's survival); two tablets of stone he brought down in his hand (the second tablets), and it was written in them the guarding of Shabbat ("guard the day of Shabbat")."

May we merit again leaders who resemble the trustworthy servant, Moshe. Let us also remember that Shabbat is our liberation from the enslavement to a variety of Golden Calves.

Shiur Delivered on 18 ADAR 5769

### **Rav Kook List**

#### **Rav Kook on the Torah Portion**

#### **Timna and Purim**

*The following description of Purim in Rav Kook's house during the years when he served as chief rabbi of Jaffa (1904-1914) was related by Rabbi Yeshaya Greenberg, headmaster of the Sha'arei Torah school in Jaffa:*

The joy overflowed in the Rav's house during the Purim holiday. Breslov hassidim, who throughout the year were warmly received by Rav Kook, on Purim became the head merry-makers. Reb Meir Anshin and his friends would dance on the table, and the sounds of song and laughter drew many people to the Rav's house. Between songs and dances, Rav Kook spoke about the holiday, making frequent interruptions to drink a lechaim. Any question or comment received an immediate rejoinder, with the Rav finding a direct connection to the holiday.

#### **Reb Moshe's Question**

At one point, Reb Moshe Betzalel Todrosovich, a wealthy Jaffa merchant and philanthropist who was instrumental in bringing Rav Kook to Jaffa, entered the Rav's house. Reb Moshe had already finished his Purim meal at home, and being somewhat inebriated, requested that the Rav expound upon a verse that had no obvious connection to the holiday.

"Rebbe, please explain to us the verse, 'And the sister of Lotan was Timna' (Gen. 36:22)."

Rav Kook raised his eyes, fixed his gaze on the questioner, and replied with a wide smile.

"Why, Reb Moshe, that verse is integrally connected to Purim. In fact, the whole story of Purim begins from there!"

Reb Moshe was astounded. "Really? What does Lotan's sister have to do with Purim?"

#### **The Root Cause of Amalek's Hatred**

Rav Kook then quoted the Talmudic statement in Sanhedrin 99b that Timna wanted to marry into the family of Abraham but was not accepted. In the end, she became the concubine of Esau's eldest son. "Better to be a maidservant to this people," Timna reasoned, "than a princess of another people." As punishment for rejecting Timna, the Jewish people were cursed with the eternal enmity of Timna's son - Amalek. This of course is the connection to the story of Purim, for Haman, the enemy of the Jews, was a descendant of Amalek. Haman's hatred of the Jews and his decree to destroy them in fact originated in the failure to convert his great-grandmother Timna. But this error was redressed in the time of Mordechai and Esther, when "Many of the peoples of the land became Jews" (Esther 8:17).

Rav Kook continued to expound on this topic for two hours, drawing from both Halachic and Aggadic sources, quoting the Zohar and Maimonides, his words shining with brilliance and erudition. When he finally concluded, Reb Moshe jumped up, grabbed the Rav and hugged him, crying, 'Rebbe, I love you!'

Adapted from Mo'adei HaRe'iyah , pp. 248-249.

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**Orthodox Union / [www.ou.org](http://www.ou.org)  
Ki Tisa - Dressing Up on Purim  
Rabbi Asher Meir**

One of the most prominent customs practiced today on Purim is to dress up in costumes, and this custom is mentioned already in the Rishonim. The Rema mentions that it is acceptable even for men to dress up as women (although there are dissenting opinions), even though this seemingly violates the prohibition of "A man's clothes shall not be on a woman, and a man shall not wear women's clothes" (D'varim 22:8). Others mention that it is customary to dress up as non-Jews, although this seemingly violates the prohibition "don't go in their ways" (Vayikra 18:3).

Here is one explanation of this custom.

The prohibition to be likened to non-Jews exists at several levels. In general, this prohibition, like other Torah prohibitions, should not stand in the way of danger, and indeed the Shulchan Arukh writes that a person may dress up like a non-Jew to avoid being identified as a Jew if Jews are being attacked (YD 157:2). However, if there is a decree for Jews to dress like non-Jews in order to make us lose our distinctiveness, then we are forbidden to change our dress even in the face of danger (YD 157:1).

Likewise, entering a place of idolatrous worship is normally forbidden; however, it is permissible in order to escape danger, but forbidden if the danger arises from a decree against Jewish worship.

In other words, the degree of prohibition depends on the motivation of hostile non-Jews. If their objective is to make us give up our traditions, then we must resist at all costs. But if their enmity is irrespective of our

customs, then we can be more lenient. I heard from a prominent Rav that in the time of the Holocaust the rabbis were particularly lenient, because the object of the Nazis was not at all to make us give up our customs; on the contrary, they explicitly included in their mass killings people of Jewish background who did not even identify themselves as Jews.

At the time of Purim, the decree of Haman was directed against all Jews. It is true that the stated reason behind the decree was Haman's claim that we were a people who didn't keep the king's laws (Esther 3:8), but this was not Haman's true motivation, and in any case the decree applied to all Jews.

In this case, dressing up as a non-Jew would have been permissible. So the custom to dress up as non-Jews reminds us that this practice would have been permissible at the time of the original miracle, due to the unique nature of Haman's decree.

Another possible explanation is that the non-Jews at that time likened themselves to Jews, as the Megila states 'And many of the common people Judaized themselves' (Esther 8:17). We commemorate and mock this insincere, purely external adherence to Judaism by adopting a purely external likeness to non-Jews while internally remaining fully devoted to our faith.

Rabbi Asher Meir has two wonderful books in print - Meaning in Mitzvot (ask for it at your local s'farim store) and The Jewish Ethicist, available at some bookstores and through the Business Ethics Center of Jerusalem, (02) 632-0222. Both works are highly recommended

Rabbi Asher Meir is the author of the book Meaning in Mitzvot, distributed by Feldheim. The book provides insights into the inner meaning of our daily practices, following the order of the 221 chapters of the Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

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