

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



GATHER AROUND

The Jews had waited for what they thought was 40 days. Where was Moshe? So they panicked and made the famous Eigel Hazahav – Golden Calf.

This week we take out two Sifrei Torah. The first is for the regular weekly portion, the second is for Parashat Parah. The latter deals with the red heifer which was used to purify the Jews from their impure status. Rashi (Megila 29a) explains the reason this portion is read before the month of Nissan is that all of Klal Yisrael had to purify themselves in preparation for the Korban Pesach - the Paschal Sacrifice.

Parashat Parah also has a strong connection with this week's Parasha as the Midrash states that the red heifer atones specifically for the sin of the golden calf.

Let us take a closer look as to how and why this may be.

After Moshe was shocked at seeing the Eigel, he came down and exclaimed Mi LaHashem Elay – whoever is for Hashem come with me. The Torah relates how only the tribe of Levi answered his call to execute judgment. Moshe explicitly tells them to go through the camp and kill - Ish Et Achiv – even their own relatives that might

have worshiped the Eigel. We are told that 3,000 people were executed that day.

The Netziv comments that 3,000 out of 600,000 is not such a big percentage (0.5%). The vast majority did not worship the Eigel.

If so, why was it that only the tribe of Levi gathered round Moshe to execute judgment?

What about all the others that never sinned why didn't they also come forward?

The Gemara in Pesachim (8a) teaches us the famous principle of Shluchei Mitsvah Einan Nizakin – agents of a Mitsvah are not damaged. Thus for example if someone is performing the Mitsvah of searching to destroy his Chametz before Pesach, even though he might put his hand through a mouse whole, he is guaranteed to be protected. The merit of the mitzvah seems to give him insurance that no wrong will occur.

The Gemara elaborates and states this is only true in a case where the damage is not common. If however the man is in a place where damage is common, then even if he is a Sheliach Mitsvah, it will not protect him. One cannot for example send a Jew into the city of Ramallah, a center of Arab anti-Israel sentiment, and feel that the Jew is protected if he is a Sheliach Mitsvah.

The Netziv has an awesome insight on this. He states that there are two methods of performing Mitsvot: out of fear and out of love. When a person performs a mitzvah out of fear, he is protected up to the point that the damage is not common. Once he enters a place of common danger he is no longer protected. On the other hand, if a person performs the mitzvah through love of Hashem, then even in a place of common danger that person will be protected. ►

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” THE WEEKLY QUOTE
« I can't change
the direction of the wind,
but I can adjust my sails to always
reach my destination. »

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on the birth of their baby girl Ariella Margalit

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DVAR TORAH

Gather around
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

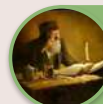
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Amongst the Bnei Yisrael, there were plenty of people that did not serve the golden calf. But only the tribe of Levi was confident enough to stand up and say we did not serve the calf and we are willing to put our lives at risk to go through the camp and rectify the sin by killing all those that did. Only they felt the connection through love, even if it meant killing their own family. Only they felt such a high connection of love of Hashem and feeling of purity. It is for this reason that they were chosen for generations to represent and serve Hashem closely.

Rashi (Chukat 19:22) quotes R. Moshe HaDarshan that the Red Heifer served as an atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. He uses an allegory concerning a child who dirtied the king's palace. "Let the mother (the Heifer) clean up the mess made by her son (the Golden Calf)." According to

many commentaries (Ramban, Ibn Ezra, Malbim), the sin of many of the Jewish people in the episode of the Golden Calf was not that they worshiped the calf as a deity but rather that they used it as a point of focus to worship G-d. Indeed, the Keruvim, the cherubs on the Aron Kodesh (Holy Ark), would serve a similar purpose. The sin lay in the fact that G-d had not permitted the image of a calf to be used to achieve this result, and therefore, such service bordered on idolatry. The antidote to the sin of serving G-d in a fashion which He had not commanded, would be a wholehearted commitment to Chukim, those laws which were commanded but do not have revealed reasons.

The Parah Aduma was a Chok. No one knows the real reasoning behind this Mitzvah, nevertheless we are commanded to do it. Hashem wished to show that we

must demonstrate our commitment to His Mitzvot even without understanding them. Of course plenty of reasons have been given for certain Mitzvot, but these are only Taamei Hamitzvot – tastes, the real reason we perform the Mitzvot is because Hashem commanded us to, and out of love we do whatever He says.

We can be tested on a day to day basis. Life is difficult and sometimes we fall down without being able to rise. Yet if our outlook is clear, and we view everything as coming from Hashem, it becomes much easier to deal with. With this attitude we can build on ourselves to reach the level of Ahavat Hashem and achieve the highest levels where we are guaranteed to constantly be protected in our service of Hashem. ■

RABBI JEFF BERGER - RAMBAM SEPHARDI SYNAGOGUE ELSTREE & BOREHAMWOOD

**DVAR
TORAH**



LEARNING TO FORGIVE

Parashat Ki Tissa, begins cheerily enough with descriptions of the Mahatsit HaShekel (the silver half-coin for taking a census) and the command to construct a washing laver placed between the outside of the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting) and the Sacrificial Altar. It includes the formula for sacred anointing oil and incense, the appointment of Betsalel from Judah and Aholiav from Dan, as chief and assistant architect respectively, and the command to consecrate Shabbat - part of which is recited each week in the morning Kiddush.

But, by the time we get to the second Aliyah, matters unexpectedly turn for the worst. The remainder of the Parasha addresses the calamity of the Golden Calf and Moshe's desperate but brilliant efforts to come to Bnei Yisrael's rescue.

Looking more closely at the chronology of the verses, the Sinai narrative from Chapter 24, picks up again in Exodus 31:18 with G-d giving Moshe the two testimonial stone tablets (Shnei Luhot)

at the end of their 40 days and 40 nights together atop the mountain.

Down below, those who feared Moshe's delayed-return, clamoured for a new leader to take them through the desert. Aharon was pressured to make the molten calf which became an object of their worship.

In anger the Almighty told Moshe, 'your' people will be annihilated. But Moshe deflected G-d's anger by questioning its futility. 'What would the Egyptians say about G-d were the Jewish people wiped out?' 'How would Your promise to the Patriarchs, to give their descendants the Land of Canaan, be fulfilled if Bnei Yisrael were killed?'

Achieving a stay of execution, Moshe descended the mountain, smashed the Luhot, destroyed the Calf, punished the perpetrators and went back to beg G-d's forgiveness further, threatening to remove himself from the Torah unless G-d relented. It is this strategy that deserves closer inspection.

Rabbi David Fohrman, whose animated Parasha summaries through Aleph-beta are widely used in Jewish schools and institutions, elaborates on the obvious but interesting parallel between Moshe and Noah.

Both men stood at a time in history when the world they knew was about to be destroyed. The same language to describe corruption/ destruction (Shihet) appears in both narratives and, similarly, we find a

word relating to the calming of G-d's anger VaYinahem (He was comforted) in both places as well.

But not content with this initial triumph, Moshe moved his residence outside of the general camp and continued to dialogue with G-d. Emboldened by his earlier success, Moshe asked to be shown G-d's face – and was even granted a glimpse of the Divine Presence!

Told to carve out a second set of tablets, Moshe ascended the next morning and was met again by a cloud, from where he heard a description of G-d's majesty known to us as the 13 attributes.

As a result of Moshe's prayers on behalf of Bnei Yisrael, G-d forgave them and offered a new covenant; a bold strategy had paid-off as a lesson for future generations when seeking G-d's forgiveness. Not surprising, this portion of Ki Tisa is read on public fast days. It's also read on Shabbat Chol HaMoed Pessach and Sukkot.

At the beginning of Noah's life, he was referred to as Ish Sadik (a righteous man). But by the end of his days he'd lost much of his spiritual greatness and became Ish HaAdamah (a man of the earth). Moshe, who began life described as Ish Mitsri (an Egyptian), ended up Ish HaElokim (a man of G-d).

Both men faced the same challenge – but the bolder one taught us we have to be strong to achieve forgiveness. ■

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI ISRAEL HAGER

THE AHAVAT ISRAEL OF VIZNITZ

Rabbi Israel Hager was the son of the saintly Rabbi Baruch of Viznitz

(may his merit protect us all), and a descendant of the Ahavat Shalom of Kossov, Rabbi Naphtali of Ropshitz, and the great Maggid of Mezritch, Rabbi Dov Ber. Rabbi Israel was recognized for his refined character early on in life, and he was always quick to help those who were afflicted or depressed. Apart from this, he was known to spend all his hours immersed in Torah study and the service of Hashem.

When his father the Rebbe of Viznitz passed away in 5653, Rabbi Israel assumed the leadership of the community. As the new Rebbe of Viznitz, he revealed himself as a very lofty individual, one who shared in the pain of both the community and the individual, and who rejoiced with each and every person. From every neighboring province, multitudes came to him in order to stand in his shadow. Opening his Beit Midrash of Viznitz, the Chassidim of Romania saw in him a great leader, a father, and a protector. He poured out his soul before Hashem in prayer, especially on festivals and the Days of Awe. His melodies took root among his Chassidim, and they are even sung to the present day. They also found a place within the greater Chassidic world. In 5665 the Rebbe founded the famous Viznitz yeshiva, which today continues his work throughout the land of Israel, especially in Bnei Brak.

In 5678 he went to live in Grosswardein, where he remained until his passing. Rabbi Israel Hager served as the Rebbe of Viznitz for many years, until his soul ascended to the celestial academy on Sivan 2, 5696. He left behind four sons: Rabbi Menachem Mendel (Av Beit Din of Vishiva), Rabbi Eliezer (Av Beit Din of Viznitz), Rabbi Chaim Meir (Rebbe in Bnei Brak and father of the present day Rebbe of Viznitz Shlita), and Rabbi Baruch (father of the Rebbe of Seret-Viznitz Shlita).

After the Second World War, Rabbi Israel Hager's remains were moved to the Zichron Meir cemetery in Bnei Brak.

May his merit protect us all ! ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

PLAYING GAMES ON SHABBAT

IS IT PERMISSIBLE TO PLAY GAMES ON SHABBAT?

The Gemara in Masechet Eruvin (103) records a prohibition against playing on Shabbat with nuts and apples, which people in those days would use for games like marbles. Initially, the Gemara suggests that this is forbidden because of the noise produced when the nuts strike each other. Ultimately, however, the Gemara concludes that playing these games is forbidden because of the concern that the nuts or apples might smooth the earth on the ground as they roll (such as by filling holes in the ground with earth), which constitutes a Shabbat violation. The Shulchan Aruch (338:5; listen to audio for precise citation) codifies this prohibition and mentions the reason that the nuts and apples might smooth the earth.

Since the concern here involves the issue of smoothing the earth on the ground, this prohibition applies only to games played on unpaved ground. It would not apply to games played on tables, tiled floors or pavement.

Nevertheless, the Kaf Ha'chayim (Rabbi Chayim Palachi, rabbi of Izmir, Turkey, 19th century), in this chapter, writes that it is improper for adults to play any sort of games on Shabbat. (We are not speaking here of gambling, which is forbidden even during the week.) Shabbat is to be used for loftier pursuits, such as prayer and Torah study, and therefore spending one's time on Shabbat playing games is inappropriate. Children may be allowed to play games on Shabbat, but adults should refrain from doing so. It should be noted that the Chida (Rav Chayim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1806) observed that certain Rabbis would play chess on Shabbat, and he speculated that they perhaps suffered from a kind of depression and felt the need to engage in some form of entertainment to overcome their melancholy. But generally speaking, one should refrain from playing games on Shabbat.

Summary: Halacha forbids playing games like marbles on unpaved surfaces on Shabbat, as there is concern that the marbles might smooth the earth on the ground, which constitutes a violation of Shabbat. On other surfaces this is, strictly speaking, permissible, but in any event playing games of any kind on Shabbat is inappropriate and at odds with the spirit of Shabbat. ■



- ❶ What were the three different types of Terumah donated?
- ❷ According to Rashi, why sailors are called "Malachim?"
- ❸ In verse 33:2, Hashem says that the inhabitants of Eretz Canaan would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?

Answer

❶ 30:15 - For the Adanim (sockets), for the purchase of communal sacrifices, and for the building of the Mishkan.
 ❷ 30:35 - Because they stir (Malach) the water with their oars.
 ❸ 33:2 - The seventh nation, the Girgashites, voluntarily emigrated.

TORAH RIDDLE

WHO I AM?

I caused death and destruction;
 I was the product of miscalculation;
 I caused the breakup of a famous pair;
 I had a living spirit but was never born.



Answer:
 The Golden Calf



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