



## *Parshas Ki Tisa 2021, a stubborn nation*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated to the memory of Shlomo Ben Edward and Edward Ben Shaul. May their souls be uplifted and memories a blessing.*

Our Parsha tells us the story of perhaps the biggest lapse of judgment in our history. A sin that caused G-d to want to destroy that generation and begin anew. The transgression that thousands of people died from and is felt till this very day, the sin of the Golden Calf.

The story began at the end of last week's Torah portion when G-d called Moshe Rabbienu up the mountain after the giving of the Torah. He was to stay on the mountain for forty days and nights to study the Torah and then teach it to the Jewish nation.

While he was on the mountain, some people intentionally miscalculated his return date and convinced people that Moshe had died. They went to Aaron and Chur, Miriam's son, demanding they make an Idol to lead them in Moshe's stead.

Chur immediately tried to talk them out of it; he told them that Moshe's return was imminent and there was no need to worry. But he was killed for refusing to follow along with their sinful plans. Aaron realized he had no choice but to follow their plan or face a similar fate. He told them to gather all their gold and bring it to him to create an Idol.

Secretly he hoped that it would take a while for them to collect it, and Moshe would come back before they were done. Unexpectedly, the people swiftly collected all their gold and brought it before him.

Having no other choice, Aaron put all the gold into a fire, and the gold took the form of a calf. The Jewish nation began dancing around the Golden Calf, believing it was their leader in Moshe's stead.

Meanwhile, G-d saw what the Jewish people were doing and told Moshe to go down to them. Moshe took the two Luchos and headed down the mountain; he saw the Golden Calf and the people dancing around it as he got closer. The Luchos he was holding suddenly became heavy, so he threw them to the ground, shattering them instantly.

Moshe burnt the Golden Calf and ground it into a fine powder. He went to the tribe of Levi and said, *"join me and defend the oneness of G-d and His Torah."* The entire tribe joined him as he punished those who sinned with the Golden Calf.

After they finished, Moshe turned to G-d and begged Him for mercy; he asked G-d to remember the covenant He made with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov. He told G-d that if He was to destroy the Jewish nation, G-d should erase his name from the entire Torah. G-d forgave the Jewish nation and told Moshe the thirteen attributes of mercy we say daily.

However, a question comes to mind: When G-d saw the golden calf, He got angry and wanted to destroy the Jewish nation. He said to Moshe (32:9), *"that we are a stubborn nation."* This sentiment and feeling are repeated twice consecutively when Moshe begs for mercy. (33:3-4) *"you are a stubborn people."* Yet, Moshe uses this fact to justify why G-d should forgive the Jewish people. He says to G-d (34:9), *"If I have gained favor in Your eyes, please come in our midst for we are stubborn people."* Why would Moshe use G-d's accusation against the Jewish nation as a defense for them? Why didn't he say that we are the only nation that recognized His oneness and sovereignty over the world?!

The Rashbam (*Rav Shmuel Ben Meir, Rashi's grandson*) on this Pasuk writes that Moshe is imploring G-d to forgive us despite being a stubborn nation. For G-d is merciful, compassionate, and kind, and He should recognize that only some people worshiped the golden calf.

Therefore, He should not destroy the entire nation for the actions of just a few people. Instead, He should forgive the rest of the nation and let them continue their journey to the promised land.

However, Rav Yitzchak Ben Yeudah HaLevi (*a thirteenth-century Rabbi from France*) in his commentary on the Torah, *Paaneach Raza*, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that the accusation and criticism that G-d had against the Jewish nation is its defense. For only a stubborn people would keep faith in G-d despite the tragedies they endured because of their belief. When we were faced with converting to another religion or being killed, **millions of Jews chose G-d and died for the sake of His holy name!**

Our unbending and firm trust in G-d is the reason He chose us in the first place. Beginning with Avraham Avinu, who was adamant that G-d created the universe despite everyone telling him the opposite. This stubbornness continued in Egypt, where Jewish people refused to give up their dress, language, and names despite facing Pharaoh's anger.

Moshe told G-d not to punish and destroy the nation for their stubbornness and inflexibility. Since we are stubborn and persistent by nature, G-d is sanctified and known in the world. **Because we are uncompromising and committed to Him, we still believe in the ultimate redemption and the coming of Moshiach!**

In our daily life, it is imperative we understand that to reach and sustain success, you must be genuinely committed to reaching your goals. Whether you are trying to build a business and be financially stable or get closer to G-d, you must be resolute in achieving your objective.

This determination must be the same even when facing hard times or obstacles. For then, you know that your ambition and drive are leading you on the path you set for yourself.

**“Be stubborn about your goals, but be flexible about your methods.”**

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,  
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*