



Parshas Ki Tisa 2024, we need You

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers. May G-d return all the hostages and return them immediately.

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna and in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia.

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. A transgression thousands of people died from and is felt till this very day, the sin of the Golden Calf.

Last week's Torah portion concludes with G-d calling Moshe Rabbienu up the mountain to learn the Torah for forty days and nights. But some people miscalculated the date and thought Moshe died on the mountain. They convinced many others that Moshe had passed on and that it was time for a new leader.

They turned to Aaron, Moshe's brother, and told him to create a leader, a Golden Calf so they may worship it. Having no choice, Aaron collected gold and threw it into a large fire. As some of the Jewish people began to dance around the fire, the gold developed into the form of a calf.

Moshe headed down the mountain with the first set of Lochos that G-d wrote Himself. When he saw the Jewish people celebrating around the Golden Calf, he threw the Lochos to the ground and shattered 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 Tórah.*" The entire tribe of Levi 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 revealed to Moshe the thirteen attributes of mercy we say daily.

However, a question comes to mind: Following the punishment of those who sinned with the Golden Calf, Moshe leaves the nation's camp. The Pasuk writes (33:7) "*And Moshe took his tent and pitched it far outside the camp.*" But what made Moshe move his tent and dwell outside the Jewish camp? Why does the Torah state and specify where Moshe relocated after receiving forgiveness for the sin of the Golden Calf? Why did Moshe seemingly withdraw from his people when they needed him most?!

Rashi, Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading Torah commentator, gives a simple explanation. He answers that Moshe Rabbeinu wanted to be able to speak with G-d at any moment.

But because of the Golden Calf, G-d was angry with the Jewish people and would not allow His glory to appear within the camp. Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu moved his tent and pitched it outside of the Jewish camp so G-d could appear to him.

The end of the Pasuk states: **"And Moshe called it the Tent of Meeting, and whomever wished to speak to G-d, would go to the Tent of Meeting outside the camp."**

However, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes in *Covenant and Conversation* on our Torah portion that Moshe couldn't have left the Jewish camp at a worse time.

The nation was deeply distressed and heartbroken, they couldn't believe that they committed such a grave sin. The Pasuk before Moshe left details the nation grieving and mourning because of their grave sin.

It may seem like Moshe left his people when they needed him most, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Rabbi Sacks writes that Moshe begged G-d for mercy, He should have compassion on the nation He took out of Egypt. G-d responded with basic forgiveness, but also distance.

He tells Moshe that from now on an angel will guide them to the promised land. The Pasuk writes, (33:2) *"And I will send an angel in front of you and I will drive out the nations of Canaan from the land."*

But Moshe would not allow that distance to become permanent or the norm, he relocated outside the camp to begin a new approach. He was, in effect, saying to G-d: What the people need is not for me to be close to them. I am just a human, here today, gone tomorrow. **But You, our Father in Heaven are eternal. You are their G-d. They need You to be close to them.**

As Rabbi Sacks puts it, "Moshe Rabbeinu said to G-d, the Jewish people need to experience not only the greatness of G-d, **but the closeness of G-d.** Not only the powerful force that struck the Egyptians with plague after plague, bringing the world's greatest empire to its knees.

Not just the G-d heard in thunder and lightning at the top of the mountain, **but G-d as a perpetual presence in the valley below.** "

The Pasuk details Moshe's protest of the angel by asking for the ultimate expression of closeness. (33:13 & 33:18) *"If I have found favor in Your eyes, **please let me know Your ways so I may know You consider this nation Your people. Please show me Your glory!**"* G-d responded to Moshe's plea, that no one may see His face and live, but His Presence will return to the nation's midst.

Rabbi Sacks concludes that aside from the Jewish people, no culture or religion has held G-d in as high regard, yet feels as close to Him. The kabbalistic poem, **Yedid Nefesh** describes the intimacy between G-d and His chosen people.

**חושה נא ואל תתעלם הגלה נא ופרוס חביב עלי את סוכת שלומך תאיר ארץ מכבודך
נגילה ונשמחה בך מהר אהוב כי בא מועד וחנני כימי עולם**

"Hurry, please, and do not hide yourself. Please, be revealed and spread the covering, Upon me, the shelter of your tranquility. Illuminate the earth with your nobility. We will rejoice in you, we will be in festivity. Hurry, beloved, for the time has come. And be good to me, like days long ago.

As we read in painstaking detail, the gravest sin of our history, we begin to discover the depth of our connection with our Father in heaven, the Master of the universe.

**"G-d is close. G-d is here. G-d is life. Therefore celebrate life.
Sanctify life. Turn life into a blessing and make a blessing over life.
That is Judaism in 25 words."**

-Letters to the Next Generation by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*