

# Guitarus



# Aish

**The Torah newsletter that's a SMASHING hit!**

**CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

## Covenant & Conversation

**A**t the height of the drama of the Golden Calf a vivid and enigmatic scene takes place. Moses has secured forgiveness for the people. But now, on Mount Sinai yet again, he does more. He asks G-d to be with the people. He asks Him to “teach me Your ways,” and “show me Your glory” (Ex. 33: 13, 18). G-d replies: “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence ... I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” But, He said, “you cannot see My face, for no one may see Me and live” (Ex. 33: 20).

G-d then places Moses in a cleft in the rock face, telling him he will be able to “see My back” but not His face, and Moses hears G-d say these words: “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious G-d, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished ... (Ex. 34: 6-7?)

This passage became known as the “thirteen attributes of G-d’s compassion.”

The sages understood this episode as the moment in which G-d taught Moses, and through him future generations, how to pray when atoning for sin.<sup>1</sup> Moses himself used these words with slight variations during the next crisis, that of the spies. Eventually they became the basis of the special prayers known as selichot, prayers of penitence. It was as if G-d were binding himself to forgive the penitent in each generation by this self-definition.<sup>2</sup> G-d is compassionate and lives in love and forgiveness. This is an essential element of Jewish faith.

<sup>1</sup> Rosh Hashanah 17b.

<sup>2</sup> The Talmud in Rosh Hashanah 17b says that G-d made a covenant on the basis of these words, binding himself to forgive those who, in penitence, appealed to these attributes. Hence their centrality in the prayers leading up to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and on Yom Kippur itself.

But there is a caveat. G-d adds: “Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.” There is a further clause about visiting the sins of the parents on the children which demands separate attention and is not our subject here. The caveat tells us that there is forgiveness but also punishment. There is compassion but also justice.

Why so? Why must there be justice as well as compassion, punishment as well as forgiveness? The sages said that “When G-d created the universe He did so under the attribute of justice, but then saw it could not survive. What did He do? He added compassion to justice and created the world.”<sup>3</sup> This statement prompts the same question. Why did G-d not abandon justice altogether? Why is forgiveness alone not enough?

Some fascinating recent research in diverse fields from moral philosophy to evolutionary psychology, and from games theory to environmental ethics, provides us with an extraordinary and unexpected answer.

The best point of entry is Garrett Harding’s famous paper written in 1968 about “the tragedy of the commons.”<sup>4</sup> He asks us to imagine an asset with no specific owner: pasture land that belongs to everyone (the commons), for example, or the sea and the fish it contains. The asset provides a livelihood to many people, the local farmers or fishermen. But eventually it attracts too many people. There is over-pasturing or overfishing, and the resource is depleted. The pasture is at risk of becoming wasteland. The fish are in danger of extinction.<sup>5</sup> What then happens? The common

<sup>3</sup> See Rashi to Genesis 1:1.

<sup>4</sup> Garrett Harding, “The tragedy of the commons,” Science 13 December 1968: Vol. 162 no. 3859 pp. 1243-1248.

<sup>5</sup> Long before Garrett Harding there was an old Hassidic story about the village where the people decided each to donate an amount of wine to fill a vat to present to the King on his forthcoming visit to the village. Secretly at night over the next few weeks each of the villagers took some wine, arguing to themselves that such a small amount would not be noticed. Each added an equal amount of water to the vat so that it stayed full. The king arrived, the villagers presented him with the vat, he drank from it and said, “It’s just plain water.” I guess many folk traditions have similar stories. This is, in essence, the tragedy of the commons.

GUITARUS AISH IS A PURIM PUBLICATION THAT REALLY  
 STRINGS PEOPLE ALONG - ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE  
 ACOUSHTICKLY CHALLENGED. BUT DON'T FRET, PICK YOURSELF UP AND  
 GROOVE WITH THE MUSIC! WE'VE SCALE-D BACK ANYTHING NOTE-  
 WORTHY (INSTEAD OF R-AMP-ING THINGS UP) SO FANS WON'T GET TOO  
 FIRED UP - AFTER ALL, WE WOULDN'T WANT THEM TO DE-BASS  
 THEMSELVES (IT'S ALL ABOUT THAT BASS, YOU KNOW).  
 SO LET'S TRY AND KEEP THINGS CHORD-IAL!  
 JUST TUNE IN AND CAPO-N KEEPIN' ON!



You're probably thinking, "You must be guitarded to have come up with a  
 flame-brained idea like this for a Purim issue!"  
 While that might be true, it's also true that most people don't even bother  
 reading this blurb. Seriously. Kinda like a mattress-tag. Does anyone even  
 know what those are about? Have a happy Purim!

good demands that everyone from here on must practice restraint. They  
 must limit the number of animals they graze or the amount of fish they catch.  
 But some individuals are tempted not to do so. They continue to over-  
 pasture or overfish. The gain to them is great and the loss to others is small,  
 since it is divided by many. Self-interest takes precedence over the common  
 good, and if enough people do so the result is disaster.

This is the tragedy of the commons, and it explains how  
 environmental catastrophes and other disasters occur. The problem is the  
 free rider, the person who pursues his or her self interest without bearing  
 their share of the cost of the common good. Because of the importance of  
 this type of situation to many contemporary problems, they have been  
 intensively studied by mathematical biologists like Anatol Rapoport and  
 Martin Nowak and behavioural economists like Daniel Kahneman and the  
 late Amos Tversky.<sup>1</sup>

One of the things they have done is to create experimental  
 situations that simulate this sort of problem. Here is one example. Four  
 players are each given \$8. They are told they can choose to invest as much  
 or as little as they want in a common fund. The experimenter collects the

<sup>1</sup> See Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*. New York: Basic, 1984. Matt  
 Ridley, *The Origins of Virtue*, Penguin, 1996. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and  
 Slow*, Allen Lane, 2011. Martin Nowak and Roger Highfield, *Super Cooperators:  
 Evolution, Altruism and Human Behaviour or Why We Need Each Other to  
 Succeed*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2011.

contributions, adds them up, adds 50% (the gain the farmer or fisherman  
 would have made by using the commons), and distributes the sum equally to  
 all four players. So if each contributes the full \$8 to the fund, they each  
 receive \$12 at the end. But if one player contributes nothing, the fund will  
 total \$24, which with 50% added becomes \$36. Distributed equally it means  
 that each will receive \$9. Three will thus have gained \$1, while the fourth,  
 the free rider, will have gained \$9.

This, though, is not a stable situation. As the game is played  
 repeatedly, the participants begin to realise there is a free rider among them  
 even if the experiment is structured so that they don't know who it is. One of  
 two things then tends to happen. Either everyone stops contributing to the  
 fund (i.e. the common good) or they agree, if given the choice, to punish the  
 free rider. Often people are keen to punish, even if it means that they will  
 lose thereby, a phenomenon sometimes called "altruistic punishment."

Some have linked participants to MRI machines to see which parts  
 of the brain are activated by such games. Interestingly, altruistic punishment  
 is linked to pleasure centres in the brain. As Kahneman puts it, "It appears  
 that maintaining the social order and the rules of fairness in this fashion is its  
 own reward. Altruistic punishment could well be the glue that holds societies  
 together."<sup>2</sup> This, though, is hardly a happy situation. Punishment is bad news  
 for everyone. The offender suffers, but so do the punishers, who have to  
 spend time or money they might otherwise use in improving the collective  
 outcome. And in cross-cultural studies, it turns out to be people from  
 countries where there is widespread free-riding who punish most severely.  
 People are most punitive in societies where there is the most corruption and  
 the least public-spiritedness. Punishment, in other words, is the solution of  
 last resort.

This brings us to religion. A whole series of experiments has shed  
 light on the role of religious practice in such circumstances. Tests have been  
 carried out in which participants have the opportunity to cheat and gain by so  
 doing. If, without any connection being made to the experiment at hand,  
 participants have been primed to think religious thoughts – by being shown  
 words relating to G-d, for example, or being reminded of the Ten  
 Commandments – they cheat significantly less.<sup>3</sup> What is particularly  
 fascinating about such tests is that outcomes show no relationship to the  
 underlying beliefs of the participants. What makes the difference is not  
 believing in G-d, but rather being reminded of G-d before the test. This may  
 well be why daily prayer and other regular rituals are so important. What

<sup>2</sup> Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 308.

<sup>3</sup> Ara Norenzayan, *Big G-ds: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*,  
 Princeton University Press, 2013, 34-35.

affects us at moments of temptation is not so much background belief but the act of bringing that belief into awareness.

Of much greater significance have been the experiments designed to test the impact of different ways of thinking about G-d. Do we think primarily in terms of Divine forgiveness, or of Divine justice and punishment? Some strands within the great faiths emphasize one, others the other. There are hellfire preachers and those who speak in the still, small voice of love. Which is the more effective?

Needless to say, when the experimental subjects are atheists or agnostics, there is no difference. They are not affected either way. Among believers, though, the difference is significant. Those who believe in a punitive G-d cheat and steal less than those who believe in a forgiving G-d. Experiments were then performed to see how believers relate to free-riders in common-good situations like those described above. Were they willing to forgive, or did they punish the free-riders even at a cost to themselves. Here the results were revelatory. People who believe in a punitive G-d, punish people less than those who believe in a forgiving G-d.<sup>1</sup> Those who believe that, as the Torah says, G-d "does not leave the guilty unpunished," are more willing to leave punishment to G-d. Those who focus on Divine forgiveness are more likely to practice human retribution or revenge.

The same applies to societies as a whole. Here the experimenters used terms not entirely germane to Judaism: they compared countries in terms of percentages of the population who believed in heaven and hell. "Nations with the highest levels of belief in hell and the lowest levels of belief in heaven had the lowest crime rates. In contrast, nations that privileged heaven over hell were champions of crime. These patterns persisted across nearly all major religious faiths, including various Christian, Hindu and syncretic religions that are a blend of several belief systems."<sup>2</sup>

This was so surprising a finding that people asked: in that case, why are there religions that de-emphasize Divine punishment? Azim Shariff offered the following explanation: "Because though Hell might be better at getting people to be good, Heaven is much better at making them feel good." So, if a religion is intent on making converts, "it's much easier to sell a religion that promises a divine paradise than one that threatens believers with fire and brimstone."<sup>3</sup>

It is now clear why, at the very moment He is declaring his compassion, grace and forgiveness, G-d insists that He does not leave the guilty unpunished. A world without Divine justice would be one where there is more resentment, punishment and crime, and less public-spiritedness and

forgiveness, even among religious believers. The more we believe that G-d punishes the guilty, the more forgiving we become. The less we believe that G-d punishes the guilty, the more resentful and punitive we become. This is a totally counterintuitive truth, yet one that finally allows us to see the profound wisdom of the Torah in helping us create a humane and compassionate society. ©2015 Rabbi J. Sacks & torah.org

*Chaim: "Doctor, doctor I think I'm shrinking!"*  
*Doctor: "Well, you'll just have to be a little patient!!!"<sup>4</sup>*

### RABBI AVI WEISS

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**A**s Moshe (Moses) descends the mountain, aware that the Jews had made the golden calf, Joshua awaits him. Hearing noise coming from the camp, Joshua tells Moshe that he hears the voice of war. In the words of Torah, "when Joshua heard the sound of the people...he said to Moshe, there is a sound of battle in the camp." (Exodus 32:17) Moshe responds that it is not the sound of war in the camp, but rather the sound of anot. (Exodus 32:18)

What exactly does this term mean?

Abarbanel suggests that Joshua did not know that the golden calf had been built. Hearing sounds, he assumed it was that of war. Moshe, aware of the reality of the situation, responds that it was not the sound of war, but rather "it was simply the sound of people making a noise." For Abarbanel, anot simply means "noise."

Ramban suggests that anot describes the type of noise being heard. Moshe "was reluctant to speak disparagingly of Israel. So he told him [Joshua] that it was the noise of merriment." For Ramban, anot means a joyous song. As Nechama Leibowitz explains, "Moshe would never denounce his people unless it were for the purpose of reproving them....He was reluctant to let Joshua have the 'latest news' of their disgrace."

Another thought comes to mind. Joshua may have indeed known what happened. He may have been telling Moshe that the Jews have rebelled, and in fact, are prepared if you will, to go to war with G-d. Joshua's words then make sense: "There is a sound of battle in the camp."

Moshe responds that he understands the actions of the people to be very different. He states that he does not hear the voice of victory or defeat as Joshua does, but he hears the voice of a nation painfully crying out. From this perspective, the word anot comes from the word enui which means



<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 44-47.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ok, now THAT's funny, right there. Get it? Fish in a tank? Oh, never mind.

"affliction"; the people were afflicted and confused. They were confused about their relationship to G-d and were in deep conflict about belief.

For Joshua, the cry means that the Jews were rebelling. Kol milchama, "the sound of battle" not only reflected the actions of the people, but was also advice to Moshe that he should take up arms in response to the challenge.

Moshe, who hears the cry as the confused state of belief of the people, believed that the reaction should be to bring the Jews back through love and care.

While it is true that Moshe takes strong action and shatters the Tablets and thousands of Jews die, it must be remembered that it is G-d's thirteen attributes of mercy that brings about the giving of the second set of Tablets. (Exodus 34:6-7)

The message: When seeing someone struggle with faith, we should hear a cry rather than rebellion and respond with love and mercy. ©2013 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and President of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School - the Modern and Open Orthodox Rabbinical School. He is Senior Rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, a Modern and Open Orthodox congregation of 850 families. He is also National President of AMCHA - the Coalition for Jewish Concerns

*Top Ten Reasons for Celebrating Purim by Kenneth Goldrich*

1. Making noise in shul is a MITZVAH!!
2. Levity is not reserved for the Levites
3. Nobody knows if you're having a bad hair day.  
You can tell them it's your costume
4. Purim is easier to spell than Chanukah, I mean Hanukah, I mean, KHanukah, I mean Chanuka, I mean the Festival of Lights.
5. You don't have to kasher your home and change all the pots and dishes.
6. You don't have to build a hut and live and eat outside (but you could volunteer to build a new Purim booth for next year's Carnival)
7. You get to drink wine and drink wine and drink wine and you don't even have to stand for Kiddush (I guess you can't!)
8. You won't get hit in the eye by a lulav
9. You can't eat hamantaschen on Yom Kippur
10. Mordecai - 1 ; Haman - 0 !!!!

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## Taking a Closer Look

"**A**nd G-d said to Moshe, 'sculpt for yourself two stone tablets, like the first ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets'" (Sh'mos 34:1). These instructions were given at the end of the second set of 40 days, telling him to carve out



new tablets to bring with him when he ascended Mt. Sinai for the third set of 40 days. During this third set of 40 days, Moshe was taught, and then recited (see page 2 of <http://tinyurl.com/pzdwjwb>) the "Thirteen Divine Attributes" of G-d, in order to attain forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf. However, if G-d had already agreed to give the nation a second set of Luchos, hadn't He already forgiven them? True, we didn't get the second Luchos until Yom Kippur (the 40th day of third set of 40 days), but the forgiveness they represent (and which we try to recreate every year on Yom Kippur) seems to have occurred 40 days earlier!

The commandment to keep the Sabbath (31:12-17) is the last thing taught before the sin of the golden calf is related, and follows the commandments regarding the building of the Mishkan. [It was also taught to the nation right before they were commanded to build the Mishkan (35:2-3), but that was done in order to teach them that they were not allowed to desecrate the Sabbath when building the Mishkan (see Rashi).] The proximity of the commandment to keep the Sabbath to the initial commandment to build the Mishkan teaches us that the same types of activities necessary to build the Mishkan are the "work" prohibited on the Sabbath (see Baal HaTurim). But what about its proximity to the sin of the golden calf? What does that teach us?

There are several aspects of forgiveness described in the narrative of the golden calf, and it's not always easy to keep track of what was forgiven and when. Some of the commentaries compound this confusion by applying the concept of the Torah not always being taught chronologically, although the reason they apply it here is to try to explain the various aspects of forgiveness and their timing. Many commentaries keep the chronology intact, though, and a straightforward reading of the verses strongly supports this. In order to try to put each aspect of forgiveness in context, an understanding of the three sets of 40 days is warranted.

The first set of 40 days began shortly after the public revelation (which was on the 6th or 7th of Sivan), and ended on the 17th of Tamuz, when Moshe descended from Mt Sinai, where he had spent the prior 40 days. Upon seeing the sin of the golden calf, he broke the (first set of) Luchos and started to repair the damage done by the sin. The second set of 40 days began when Moshe went back to G-d to try to attain forgiveness for it (32:31), and ended at the end of the month of Av. These 40 days are described (D'varim 9:18, see Rashi) as having been spent by Moshe begging for forgiveness, although there is some discussion as to whether he spent these 40 days atop Mt. Sinai non-stop (as he did for the first and third sets), or whether he ascended and descended from Mt Sinai on a regular basis, taking care of things in the camp as well, or whether he stayed in the camp the entire time, spending much of it in his tent (which he had moved outside the camp, see Sh'mos 33:7-11) where he beseeched G-d to forgive

the nation (see N'tziv on 33:12). The third set of 40 days started on Rosh Chodesh Elul, and ended on Yom Kippur with Moshe having attained complete forgiveness.

The first “forgiveness” attained (32:14) was that G-d wouldn't destroy the nation, which is stated during the narrative of the first 40 days. Not wiping them out addressed Moshe's concern about what the Egyptians would say (32:12), but didn't necessarily mean they would remain G-d's chosen nation; they could still be around without still having a special relationship with G-d. [It was G-d agreeing not to destroy them right then and there that gave Moshe time to try to fix things, and subsequently gain additional levels of forgiveness (see Ramban on 32:12).] After Moshe destroyed the golden calf (32:20), and had those who had sinned publicly (after being warned not to) executed (32:27-28, see Rashi on 32:20 and 32:35), Moshe went back to G-d to ask for forgiveness (32:31). G-d indicated that the nation would not only not be destroyed, but could resume their trip to the Promised Land (32:34, 33:1-3), albeit without His presence dwelling within them. This wasn't enough for Moshe, who insisted that G-d Himself lead them to the Promised Land, not just an angel (33:12-16). G-d acquiesced to this as well (33:17), as well as to Moshe's request that G-d no longer rest His presence among other nations (see Rashi). Since the purpose of this was to differentiate between the “chosen” nation and the other nations (see Rashi on 33:16), this obviously means that G-d would resting His presence amongst Moshe's nation. And since all this occurred before Moshe ascended Mt. Sinai for the third set of 40 days, what was left for Moshe to ask for?

The commandment to keep the Sabbath was included in the “Ten Commandments” (20:8), and was taught even earlier than that (16:23; see also Rashi on 15:25). After teaching Moshe about the Mishkan, G-d told Moshe to “speak to the Children of Israel, saying, ‘nevertheless, my Sabbaths shall you keep, for it is a sign between Me and you for all your generations, to know that I am G-d Who sanctifies you’” (31:13). Reiterating the need to keep the Sabbath here has multiple purposes -- not only because of some of the details added (such as the death penalty, see 31:14), but because of its relevance to the Mishkan (as previously mentioned). But what does the expression “to know that I am G-d Who sanctifies you” add? Obviously, there are many things that it could add (as Chazal darshen), but Rashi understands the “knowledge” it brings about to be regarding the other nations, that they will now that it is G-d Who sanctifies us. How will they know this? “Because G-d made the heaven and the earth in six days, and rested on the seventh day” (31:17). When the Children of Israel keep the Sabbath, they are not only testifying that G-d created the world, but that the deity they are worshipping is the One Who created the world. Idol worshippers didn't believe they worship the Creator,

but that the Creator had given other deities dominion over things, and they were therefore worth worshipping. The Creator, on the other hand, is “the Uppermost Deity” (see B'reishis 14:19-20), respected by idol worshippers too (see Yonah 1:9-10; even though the sailors all cried out to their deities, upon hearing that Yonah worshipped the “G-d of the heavens, Who made the sea and the dry land” they became “greatly afraid,” recognizing that the Creator is far above the deities they worshipped). By keeping the Sabbath, it would be clear that the nation traveling through the desert with a divine cloud protecting them worships the Creator, not just some run-of-the-mill deity. It would therefore seem that one of the prerequisites for G-d resting His presence in the Mishkan (or on the nation as a whole) is that it would be clear to all that the nation He was dwelling amongst worshipped the Creator of the world.

Unfortunately, by making a golden calf and worshipping it, this was all undone. How could any outsider think that they were worshipping the Creator if they had made a golden calf and treated it as a deity? Any anger G-d would have normally had over sin was magnified because of the implications of this sin. Not only did they disobey G-d; not only did they allow some to worship another deity, but one of the main purposes of taking the Children of Israel out of Egypt (that others should “know” about G-d, see 7:17, 8:18, 9:14, 9:29) was now undermined. Even after G-d agreed not to destroy them, and to allow them to proceed towards the Promised Land, and even to have His presence rest on their leader (Moshe) and not on the leader of any other nation (which would distinguish them from the others), G-d was not yet willing to rest His presence on the entire nation. He would lead them, with His “cloud pillar” in front, but not dwell amongst them, with His clouds protecting them and His “cloud pillar” resting on the Mishkan. Moshe could carve a second set of Luchos to signify that there was still a covenant between G-d and the Children of Israel, but that covenant no longer included His dwelling amongst them. They could worship Him, and He would fulfill His promise to their forefathers. He would even accompany them on their trip to the Promised Land. But there would be no Mishkan.

This was the status of the relationship after the second set of 40 days. Then Moshe took advantage of learning the powerful prayer of the “Thirteen Divine Attributes,” and started praying. Day after day. For 40 days. Until finally, on the 40th day, G-d completely forgave the nation, and agreed to let them build a Mishkan for Him to dwell in. The covenant, which the Luchos represented, now took on added significance. True, there would need to be an official vehicle for repairing the relationship if/when it weakened again (the offerings brought in the Mishkan, coupled with sincere repentance), but G-d's response after Moshe's 40 days of saying the “Thirteen Divine Attributes” was “behold I am enacting a covenant -- before your entire nation (and not just you) I will perform wonders,” wonders that

had heretofore "never existed," not "in all the land" nor "in any nation" (34:10). G-d would rest His presence on the nation (and only this nation), and they could now build the Mishkan for Him to dwell in. © 2015 Rabbi D. Kramer

NEW YORK — In an unusual display of unity, leaders of five Chasidic groups today issued a joint statement in support of proposed state legislation to allow same-sex marriages. The groups represented were Belz, Pupa, Saatmar, Bobov, and Lubavitch. "Of course we want same-sex marriages," said Rabbi Wurzma Shtreimel, head of the Belz movement. "A Belzer should marry only a Belzer. That makes perfect sense." The other rabbis agreed.

"If a Saatmar weds a Bobover, woe to their offspring," proclaimed Rabbi Praymita Gartel of Saatmar. "What would their children be—Saatovers?? That's totally unheard of."

The rabbis shared concerns about the dilution of their individual groups through intersect marriages. "The Tanya warns us," said Rabbi Mendy Pantz of Lubavitch. "If a Lubavitcher marries outside his sect, his children lose half their heritage. His son is not Lubavitch, just Vitch. And his grandson becomes a son of a Vitch."

At a separate news conference, Chasidic women expressed similar concerns. "It's less confusing when our kindt marry their own kind," said Rebbetzin Donna Kittel, founder of a Pupa women's group, The Mamas and the Pupas.

To prevent intersect marriages, Belz rebbetzin Gitta Kapotah announced the formation of a new community matchmaking service, Wedding Belz. "We must protect our Belz," she said. "They're our family jewels."



**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

**Shabbat Shalom**

"**W**hen Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the Two Tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord" (Exodus 34:29). What is the significance of the dazzling radiance of Moses's face and why did it not attain this shining glow until he received the Second Tablets on Yom Kippur? And, perhaps the most difficult question of all, why did Moses break the first tablets? Yes, he was bitterly disappointed, perhaps even angry, at the Israelites' worship of the Golden Calf only 40 days after G-d's first Revelation on Shavuot; however, these tablets were "the work of G-d and they were the writing of G-d." How could the holiest human being take the holiest object on earth and smash it to smithereens? Was he not adding to Israel's sin, pouring salt on the wounds of the Almighty (as it were)? My revered teacher, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, taught that Moses emerges from our portion of Ki Tisa not only as the greatest prophet of the

generations but also as the exalted rebbe of Klal Yisrael (All of Israel), as Moshe Rabeinu; Moses the teacher and master of all the generations. This unique transformation of his personality took place on Yom Kippur; it is the sobriquet of Rebbe which occasions the rays of splendor which shone forth from his countenance.

The midrash on the first verse of the Book of Leviticus, "And [G-d] called out to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting..." provokes a remarkable insight. The biblical word for "called out" in this text is *vayiker*, a word which suggests a mere chance encounter rather than an actual summoning or calling out of the Divine; indeed, our Masoretic text places a small letter 'alef' at the end of the word. The midrash explains that it was Moses's modesty which insisted upon an almost accidental meeting (*veyikra*) rather than a direct summons.

However, when G-d completed the writing down of the Five Books, there was a small amount of ink left over from that small 'alef'; the Almighty lovingly placed the surplus of sacred ink on Moses's forehead, which accounts for the glorious splendor which emanated from his face.

Allow me to add to this midrash on the basis of the teaching of Rabbi Soloveitchik. The essence of the Second Tablets included the Oral Law, the human input of the great Torah Sages throughout the generations which had been absent from the first tablets.

Hence Chapter 34 of our portion opens with G-d's command to Moses, "Hew for yourself two stone tablets" – you, Moses, and not Me, G-d; the first tablets were hewn by G-d and the commandments were engraved by G-d, whereas the second tablets were hewn by the human being Moses and the commands were engraved by him. The chapter concludes: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Write for yourself these words for on the basis of these words [the Oral Law, the hermeneutic principles and the interpretations of the rabbis of each generation] have I established an [eternal] covenant with Israel.'"

Rabbi Soloveitchik maintains that during the 40 days from the beginning of the month of Elul to Yom Kippur, Moses relearned the 613 commandments with the many possibilities of the Oral Law; Moses's active intellect became the "receiver" for the active intellect of the Divine, having received all of the manifold potential possibilities of the future developments of Torah throughout the generations. This is the meaning of the Talmudic adage that "Every authentic scholar ('*talmid vatik*') who presents a novel teaching is merely recycling Torah from Sinai."

In this manner, Moses's personality became totally identified and intertwined with Torah, a sacred combination of the Divine words and the interpretations of Moses. Moses became a living 'Sefer Torah', a "ministering vessel" (*kli sharet*) which can never lose its sanctity.

The Beit Halevi (Rav Yosef Dov Baer Halevi Soloveitchik, the great-grandfather of my teacher) maintains that the special radiance which emanated from Moses's countenance originated from the concentrated sanctity of Moses's identity with the many aspects of the Oral Torah which his own generation was not yet ready to hear, but which Moses kept within himself, for later generations. Whenever the inner world of the individual is more than it appears to be on the surface, that inner radiance becomes increasingly pronounced and externally manifest. Moses's radiant glow was Oral Torah dependent, not at all germane to the first tablets, which contained only the Written Law.

Why did Moses break the first tablets? Moses understood that there was a desperate need for a second set of tablets, born of G-d's consummate love and unconditional forgiveness, with an Oral Law which would empower the nation to be G-d's partners in the developing Torah. But G-d had threatened to destroy the nation. Moses breaks the first tablets as a message to G-d: Just as the tablets are considered to be "ministering vessels" which never lose their sanctity even if broken, so are the Jewish People, Knesset Yisrael, teachers and students of Torah, "ministering vessels," who will never lose their sanctity, even if G-d attempts to break them! The Jewish nation, repositories of the oral teachings, are the heirs to the eternal sanctity of Moses their Rebbe. ©2015 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

### SHE'ARIM

## From Sadness to Joy

by Holly Pavlov, Director of She'arim

"Just as when the month of Av begins, we curtail joy, so, when the month of Adar begins, we increase joy" (Ta'anit 29a). On the surface, it would seem that there is no inherent connection between

the two months of Av and Adar. Each reflects a different historical event: During the month of Av, the Temple was destroyed; during the month of Adar, the miracle of Purim occurred. And yet, the Rabbis of the Talmud see a clear conceptual link between them. How could such disparate events and commemorations be linked?

The ninth of Av is a time of deep mourning for the Jewish people. The roots of this mourning are found in the episode of the twelve spies sent by Moshe to check out the promised land. They came back with a report that discouraged the nation from entering the land of Israel, causing the nation to weep over their

seeming inability to conquer the land of their fathers. Upon seeing the nation cry, Hashem declared, "Since you wept for no reason, I will give you cause to weep for generations to come." Thus, a process in Jewish history was set in motion which culminated with the exile after the destruction of both Temples on the ninth of Av.

Was Hashem so angry that He meted out a punishment as a form of vengeance? Surely not! Indeed, this punishment was meant to correct a flaw in the understanding of Clal Yisrael, the people of Israel. According to the Sefat Emet, the sin of the spies was the desire to remain in the world of the desert, a world of revealed miracles, of a spiritual life so powerful that they need not worry about material needs. They yearned to maintain this lifestyle, and did not want to enter Israel, a land where the natural and miraculous are so closely intertwined, that spirituality is only attained through a physical connection with the land.

This flaw in Israel's understanding eventually led to their exile from the land. Rav Chaim Ya'akov Goldvicht, of blessed memory, explains: To teach Clal Yisrael how to live in the land of Israel, Hashem exiled them to foreign lands where He is hidden within nature, where they would have to seek spirituality in places where it did not obviously exist. In exile, life was exactly the opposite of life in the desert. Only when they discovered how to use the physical world to reach out to Hashem, would they return to their own land and use their knowledge to serve Him.

So they were sent into exile, to a place of *hester panim*, where Hashem's face is hidden from view, where His presence is not readily felt. Megilat Esther tells us how the Jews fared in exile. In Shushan, a city of overabundant material wealth, the Jews reconfirmed their deep connection with Hashem. When confronted with the lack of clarity that exile brings, Esther asked, "What this was and why this was?" (Esther 4:5) She wants to understand how a Jew

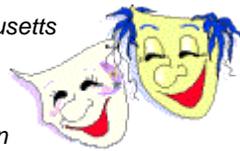
confirms his connection with our Father in Heaven when He cannot be seen. Mordeci's response, "Who knows if for this reason you have attended royalty," (Esther 4:6), is meant to indicate to Esther that while nothing in the physical world is clear, especially in exile, we believe that Hashem is the guiding force responding to our needs and even anticipating them. During the month of Adar, in Shushan, the nation reaffirmed their commitment to Torah, to a spiritual life; they reasserted their acceptance of Torah and Mitzvot. They were no longer in the desert, a place of total spirituality, nor were they in Israel, a land where the material and the spiritual work in tandem. They were deep in exile, in darkness, banished from the throne of G-d,



yet it is here that they find Him. Therefore, the process of rebuilding the Temple began. For only when the Jews learn to understand and use the physical world to achieve spirituality will they fully appreciate and understand the land of Israel and be ready to return.

When the month of Av begins, we decrease our joy for at this time we were forced out of Zion. The beginning of the month of Adar brings us great joy because this is when we begin the process of our return to Zion. Just as Av ushers in sadness as we mourn the destruction we brought upon ourselves, so Adar ushers in happiness as we rejoice the commencement of the rebuilding of the Temple and the return to the land of miracles. ©2002 H. Pavlov and She'arim

*Back in the 1800s the Tates Watch Company of Massachusetts wanted to produce other products and, since they already made the cases for watches, they used them to produce compasses. The new compasses were so bad that people often ended up in Canada or Mexico rather than California. This, of course, is the origin of the expression, "He who has a Tates is lost!"*



**RABBI BEREL WEIN**

**Wein Online**

Even after millennia of analysis, commentary and sagacious insights, the story of the Jewish people creating and worshiping the Golden Calf, as recorded for us in this week's Torah reading, remains an enigma and a mystery. After all of the miracles of Egypt and the splitting of Yam Suf, manna from heaven and the revelation at Sinai, how is such a thing possible?

The fact that our great sainted priest Aharon, the most beloved of all Jews and the symbol of Jewish brotherhood and service to G-d and man, is not only involved but is described as being the catalyst for the actual creation of the Golden Calf, simply boggles our minds. One is almost forced to say that there is no logical or even psychological explanation as to how and why this event occurred.

The Torah tells us the story in relatively dry narrative prose. Apparently it comes to teach us that there is no limit to the freedom of thought and behavior of human beings, to act righteously or in an evil fashion as they wish. No logic, no series of miracles,

no Divine revelations can limit the freedom of choice that the Lord granted to humans.

The assumption of Western man and his civilization and society was and is that there is a logic and rationale for everything that occurs. This assumption is flawed and false. History is basically the story of the follies, mistakes and irrational behavior of individuals and nations. This week's Torah reading is merely a prime illustration of this human trait. Our freedom of choice is so absolute that we are able to destroy ourselves without compunction, thought or regret.

Nevertheless, I cannot resist making a point about what led up to Israel's tragic error in creating and worshiping the Golden Calf. The Torah emphasizes that perhaps the prime cause for the building of the Golden Calf by Jewish society then was the absence of Moshe.

While Moshe is up in heaven, freed of all human and bodily needs and restraints, the Jewish people are in effect leaderless. It is true that Aharon and Chur and the seventy elders are there in the midst of the encampment but they do not have the gravitons of leadership that can guide and govern an otherwise unruly, stiff-necked people.

Successful nation building is always dependent upon wise, patient, strong and demanding leadership. The leader has to be able not only to blaze the trail ahead for his people but he also must be able to stand up to his people in a manner that may be temporarily unpopular. The failures of both Aharon, as recorded for us in this week's Torah reading, and of King Saul as described for us in the Book of Samuel, are attributed to their inability to withstand the popular pressure of the moment.

Moshe, the paragon for all Jewish leadership throughout the ages, is cognizant of the wishes and wants of the people but he does not succumb to that pressure. The Torah describes Moshe as one whose "eye never dimmed." He always sees past the present with a penetrating view and vision of the future. The absence of such a person and leader can easily lead to the creation and worshiping of a Golden Calf. ©2015 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory](http://www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory).

**Hog Samayach!**

