Parashat Ki Tissa (Parah)   No 1665: 20 Adar 5777 (March 18, 2017)

WANT TO BECOME A MEMBER?  Membership: $50.00
CLICK HERE TO JOIN OR DONATE TO THE RZA  Pillar
Membership: $180.00

We are in the process of collecting membership dues for 2017.
Please show your support and join as a member or renew your membership at this time.

Religious Zionists of America
305 Seventh Avenue, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10001
office@rza.org, www.rza.org

NEW!!!
Introducing a new section to our website.
MEDIA RESOURCES

We are pleased to introduce a media resource section for our RZA-Mizrachi website! This section is meant to provide helpful resources for Israel related news, media, and advocacy, as well as Torah resources.

Please take a moment to see what’s there. Kindly let us know if there are additional sites that we should add to this list.

Many thanks to RZA Aryeh Fellow Alex Sachs for preparing this section.

You can find our new section here.

Humans of Israel

Welcome to Humans of Israel!
Our team is dedicated to increasing awareness of people that made a significant impact on Israeli society, served in the IDF, and/or made Aliyah. While we were in Israel during winter break, we sat down with our friends who made Aliya and talked with them about their journey. We listened and asked questions to understand why these people made these decisions and the difficulties they went through while executing it.

We took these interviews and are now sharing them with you to expose the true greatness of our brothers and sisters who are making this journey.

Shaul Hafner is now studying Electrical Engineering at Tel Aviv University.

What attracted you to Israel?

"It always was somewhere in the back of my mind because I cared about Israel very deeply; living here last year [while learning at Yeshivat Lev HaTorah] made me realize that this is something I want to do. Overall the main reason I am here is just because you can never know your security living outside of Israel. There are places where the Jews have lived throughout history where the mentality was that this is the place where the Jews can flourish and that this is the place where the Jews can survive, and it worked for centuries at a time, but it would always come to an end. Eventually at the end of the day, history says that the Jews need their own country to guarantee their own survival, their own rights and their own privileges. From a religious standpoint this is also the land G-d gave us."

Why does the responsibility fall on your hands?

"We go through the story of Purim with, Haman trying to destroy us. After the failed attempt, Cyrus lets us to go back to our land and rebuild Beit Hamikdash. We were almost in a genocide by every nation in the world, and what did we do? Ezra had to get all the criminals to go back, and that was after a lot of convincing. You can say that "oh that is so weird, why didn't they go back?" I look at that as a mashal (parable) for today, we finally have the state of Israel after 2,000 years. It is definitely nice to be places all across the world, but at the end of the day this is where the Jewish people belong and this is the home of the Jewish people. Therefore, I see this as my responsibility to lead the Jewish people back. Throughout Jewish history the Jews have moved around. Your grandfather is not from the same place you are, nor was his great grandfather. By living here I am starting a new generation that will hopefully will not move and will stay here. And this all starts with me."

Is the experience what you expected to be?
"Going in I knew there were going to be a lot of difficulties. In fact, one of my favorite quotes is "making aliya isn’t hard, it is impossible." The products aren’t the same as the American products, and the people are more aggressive. It is not the experience I expected, but the ends justify the means. Anyhow, what is life without a little challenge, if you aren’t challenged you aren’t going anywhere."

Introducing the New RZA-Aryeh Fellowship!

Meet Adina Lerner

The RZA-Aryeh Fellowship is a new initiative of the RZA-Mizrachi to strengthen the mission of Religious Zionism. Fifty college and graduate school students from around the country have been invited to spend their winter-break in Israel where they will be studying Torah and attending intensive seminars devoted to Religious Zionism education. Upon their return the Aryeh Fellows will focus on their year-long Manhigut (leadership) projects designed to bring the message of Religious Zionism back to communities across America. We are excited to profile a different “Aryeh Fellow” each week.

Adina Lerner is a freshman at Queens Macaulay Honors College, and is very proud of the fact that she still does not know what she wants to major in. She has always been involved with Bnei Akiva starting with going to Moshava for the summer, and moving on to getting involved in her local Snif, Snif West Hempstead. She spent two years as Rosh Snif, where she cultivated and shared a love for Zionism and all things Israel. She spent last year studying at Midreshet Torah V’Avodah, where she fell even more deeply in love with Israel. While at TVA she had the amazing opportunity to volunteer with Magen David Adom, Israel’s Ambulance corps. It was there that she discovered that she loved working on ambulances.

Adina loves reading, and is always looking for a good recommendation. She also enjoys visiting museums, and just about anything else related to history. After having spent the last summer working as a cashier at a local restaurant, she is determined to get her degree, and go on to do great things.

Israel Club Kickoff Event at Lander College

RZA AryehFellows Tzvi Wolkenfeld and Yair Adler hosted a Nefesh B’Nefesh event kicking off the Lander College Israel Club. The event was a great success! The event heard from Nefesh B’Nefesh representative Ezra Kapetansky. Ezra discussed the ways in which one can obtain internships or jobs in Israel, and how past Olim through Nefesh B’Nefesh can help assist those thinking about Aliyah with their future plans. Students had an opportunity to ask the questions at the conclusion of the event.
Tzvi initially began the event by introducing the new "Lander Israel Club," mentioning the RZA Aryeh Fellowship he is currently a part of. He discussed how the RZA sent the fellows to Israel over winter break and the mission the RZA is trying to accomplish. Overall, the turnout of the event was impressive, and Tzvi and Yair expect the new Israel Club to expand on campus in the coming years.

RZA Aryeh Fellows presents:
Inter-Collegiate Game Night + Chidon HaTanakh
RZA ARYEH FELLOWS PRESENTS:

INTER-COLLEGIATE
GAME NIGHT

+ CHIDON HATANAKH

JOIN YOUR FELLOW COLLEGE STUDENTS FOR A FUN NIGHT OF ISRAEL-THEMED PANOPLY, DINNER AND REFRESHMENTS, AND WATCH OR COMPETE IN THE FIRST EVER COLLEGIATE CHIDON HATANAKH!

SUNDAY, APRIL 2ND
6 PM (CHIDON NO LATER THAN 7:30)
CONGREGATION ADERETH EL
133 EAST 29TH STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10016

First Prize - $300 + Set of Tanakh Sefarim. Second and Third Prizes - Set of Tanakh Sefarim. (Prizes subject to change)

Open to students and young professionals ages 18-24

The Chidon will feature approximately 40 Perakim that focus on Israel, Zionism, and Shivat Zion:

For more info check out our Facebook event "RZA GAME NIGHT + CHIDON HATANAKH" and sign up @ tinyurl.com/rrzachidon

Order your Yom Yerushalayim buttons today!

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR YOM YERUSHALAYIM

As the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem approaches, our support of Israel is more important than ever.
Please reply to this email to order your Yom Yerushalayim "United with Jerusalem" buttons.

These buttons are perfect to hand out at your Yom Yerushalayim celebrations.

$36 per 100 buttons.

Please contact our office at 212-465-9234 or office@rza.org to order!
Dear Friend of Religious Zionism,

One of the initiatives we are planning, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the re-unification of Jerusalem, is an “Honor Roll” to be signed by the leadership of congregations and schools across the country.

1) Please have your leadership inform us if they want to be included on our Honor Roll. (We will include the names of all participating institutions in the media).

NEXT STEPS

Now that you have signed the Yom Yerushalayim Honor Roll please tell us:

How will your institution be celebrating YY50?

Please let us know so that we can publicize your Yom Yerushalayim program.

Our website will feature Yom Yerushalayim Religious Zionist events taking place all across North America. Please send us your flyers, promotional videos, Facebook pages, general announcements and any other material you may have.

The Religious Zionists of America is the US affiliate of the 115 year old World Mizrachi movement. The goal of the RZA Mizrachi is to instill in the American Jewish community a commitment to religious Zionism, the preservation of Jewish political freedom, the enhancement of Jewish religious life in the land of Israel, and the promotion of aliya. For more information visit: www.rza.org

If you haven’t started planning, here are some suggestions:

- Concert
- Picnic
- Educational Program
- Flag Ceremony
- Lecture
- Game Night
- Mission to Israel
- Siyum
- BBQ
- Movie
- Yom Iyun
- Israeli Kiddush
- T’fillah Chagagit
- Carnival
2) Please share this Honor Roll with institutions in your community and encourage participation.

3) Please arrange to display this Honor Roll in the lobbies of your Shuls and Schools. Click [here](#) to print out a copy of the poster OR kindly email us to let us know if you’d like us to mail you a hard copy flyer or poster.

More than 170 Shuls and Schools have signed up. If your community is not yet on our list please let us know.

Rabbi Gideon Shloush
Presidium
National Director
Oliver
Religious Zionists of America - Mizrachi
Mr. Martin
Rabbi Leonard Matanky
Dr. Ernest

Below is a list of shuls, schools, and organizations that are participating in our Honor Roll:

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Boca Raton Synagogue
Boca Raton, FL
Rabbi Efrem Goldberg
Congregation Torah Ohr
Boca Raton, FL
Rabbi Benjamin Yasgur
Katz Yeshiva High School
Boca Raton, FL
Rabbi Jonathan Kroll
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Boynton Beach, FL
Rabbi Avi Billet
Anshe Emuna Congregation
Delray Beach, FL
Rabbi Jack Engel
Young Israel of Hollywood
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Hebrew Academy (RASG)
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Skokie, IL
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Hillel Torah North Suburban Day School
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Torah Academy of Bergen County
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Atlantic Beach, NY
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Montreal, Canada
Rabbi Yechezkel Freundlich
Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue
Montreal, Canada
Rabbi Schacher Orenstein
Congregation Machzikey Hadass
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Rabbi Idan Scher
Zichron Yisroel
Thornhill, Canada
Rabbi Charles Grysman
Beth Avraham Yoseph Congregation
Toronto, Canada
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Netivot HaTorah Day School
Toronto, Canada
Rabbi J. Rothman
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Toronto, Canada
Rabbi Chaim Strauchler
Tanenbaum Hebrew Academy
Toronto, Canada
Rabbi Lee Buckman
Kollel Agudath Achim
Jerusalem, Israel
Rabbi Aharon Ziegler
What Leaders Must Hide from the Public

Rabbi Ya’akov Trump

Assistant Rabbi of Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst

Cedarhurst, NY

Intoday’s day and age it is very hard to hide
anything from the public. That is certainly the case for leaders in society. Every off-hand comment and every subtle mistake is scrutinized and judged by an unforgiving public. This is actually quite positive in many ways. In Western civilization, gone are the days of dictators and autocrats who could make decisions without accountability. We want leaders who have nothing to hide.

At the same time, the Torah seems to argue that there is something which every good leader must hide.

In Parshat Ki Tisa, after the whole Golden Calf incident, we meet Moshe descending from Mount Sinai. What is curious about this whole story is that after his descent he only communicates with the people while wearing a veil.

Shmot 34:33-34

33 And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. 34 But when Moses went in before the LORD that He might speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and he came out; and spoke unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded.

Why is Moshe wearing a veil? What is he covering up?

Well, that's a bit of a funny question because the Torah itself seems to address that issue directly just a few short verses before. It is because Moshe’s face is beaming this heavenly light. For whatever reason, his time up on Sinai left a spiritual residue which transformed his face and because of that people simply couldn’t look at him directly. That is why he needed the veil.

That is what most of the Mepharshim, including the Klei Yakar, suggest. Moshe had to wear the veil to shield the people from his illuminated face. This is what we all grew up learning and it makes a whole deal of sense in the context of Shmot chapter 34.

It is interesting to note though, that there are those who read this section a little differently. Rabbi Akiva Eiger has a fascinating note relating to this story. He argues that Moshe used the veil because he had to cover his own humility before speaking to the people. As we know, Moshe was the humblest person to have lived and in order to converse with the people as a leader, he needed to hide that humility. His public personae needed to veil his private character makeup.

That is a very fascinating idea, but truthfully, it sounds a little far-fetched. Isn’t it true that the pesukim explicitly indicate that he covered his face immediately following his descent from the mountain with these beams of light emanating from his face? Humility doesn’t seem to be a feature of this narrative at all.

Or is it?

The Midrash Rabba is also puzzled about this story but it spends less time focusing on the veil and more time trying to figure out why Moshe's face was shining to start off with. One suggestion the Midrash makes as to the origins of that light was that there was a little ink left over from writing the Torah and Moshe dabbed that on his forehead and that is what was shining so brightly when he came down.

Now that is all fine and good if the celestial office was being stocked by an ordinary operations manager who over-ordered in this case. But we are talking about G-d Himself providing the equipment. Where did the extra ink come from? The Midrash explains that there
were certain letters which were supposed to be written one way and Moshe begged for them to be minimized. Here are two examples.

In Parshat Behaalotcha, the pasuk describes Moshe is very laudable terms.

Bamidbar 12:3

3 Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth.

The word ‘anav’ is spelled missing a ‘yud’. It should be spelled ינע but Moshe couldn’t bring himself to write that about himself, so he compromised to write it missing the letter that doesn’t change the meaning.

Another example is the first pasuk of the book of Vayikra.

Vayikra 1:1

1 And the LORD called unto Moses, and spoke unto him out of the tent of meeting, saying:

What is most noticeable is that the alef at the end of the first word is smaller than the other letters. Rashi addresses this anomaly there and explains that Moshe was uncomfortable writing the word Vayikra which would indicate that G-d called directly to him. Instead he begged to remove the ‘alef’ to have it read Vayikar – and G-d chanced upon Moshe. G-d did not allow this amendment so the compromise was a small alef.

What both these examples point to is the same idea. There was extra ink because Moshe was uncomfortable praising himself. He was so humble he simply couldn’t use all the ink on himself. The irony is that extra ink caused him to shine brightly. He was shining because of that extra does of humility.

What Rabbi Akiva Eiger argues is that humility is a beautiful and subtle characteristic. However, when Moshe came down the mountain and had to deal with humans, he had to cover it. As a leader he needed to have a strong face and he buried his humility in him for the time it would be appropriate. He never dismissed it, he just covered it up. There are times when we need to be leaders. There are times when the Jewish people need to be leaders in the world. It is precisely at such times that humility needs to be hidden.

As a nation we suffered as the disgraced brother for centuries and millennia. We had no recourse and we drifted from country to country following expulsion after expulsion. We suffered at the hands of the merciless and still staggered through Jewish history. We have been blessed to live a time when we finally have a degree of sovereignty. We are blessed to live in an era in which Jewish leadership is possible in the international arena. In this realm of leadership, we hearken back to Moshe’s lesson. We sometimes need to don a veil when interacting with the world. We must remain humble at heart but strong on the outside.

That is the one thing leaders must cover from the world.

Save the Date - Yeshivat HaKotel Dinner

Yeshivat HaKotel will be hosting their 50th Anniversary dinner on Tuesday, Yom Yerushalayim, May 23, at the Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York City. Mr. and Mrs. Louis Drazin of Montreal will be honored for their many years of support and devotion to Yeshivat Hakotel. The program will include a Tefila Chagigit, Dvar Torah by our Dean of Students Rabbi Reuven Taragin, and music by Eitan Katz.

For those unable to join the mission to Israel, this is an incredible opportunity to
celebrate Yom Yerushalayim here in the United States.

More details to follow.

Yom Yerushalayim Invitation

Watch this video invitation from the iconic paratroopers who liberated Jerusalem in 1967. They invite you to join them for a once in a lifetime opportunity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Yom Yerushalaym, May 22nd-May 25th. More details below.

Join us for Yom Yerushalyaim!

Please ask your Shul Rabbi and local school to include this in their weekly emails. Make sure to join us for this once in a lifetime opportunity!

In light of the UN Security Council vote, our support for Yerushalayim is needed now more than ever. Register now for this once in a lifetime opportunity. Join Jewish people from around the world as we gather in our holiest city.
Dear RZA-Mizrachi Friends,

We very much look forward to having you take part in our Mizrachi World Movement's "This Year in Jerusalem" Mega-Mission over Yom Yerushalayim. Our aim is to bring thousands of people (including rabbinic and community leaders) from hundreds of communities from across the global Jewish community to learn, experience and celebrate together at this momentous time in Jewish history.

Please see below a personal invitation from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, one of the global leaders of the mission, inviting you to join him on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

More details about the program can be found at the following link - www.mizrachi.org/YY50 - including the draft schedule, highlights, pricing options and booking procedure.

Please note the following:

1. There are 10 hotel options, with a price range depending on hotel choice. Each hotel package includes breakfast, lunch and dinner (excluding Wed evening). The hotel packages also include the entire 4 day program at discounted rates.

2. There is also an option for people who are not staying in hotels - if they have their own accommodation - to join for the 4 day program, at a cost of $630 per person. It does not include hotel, breakfast and dinner, but does include transport from central meeting points to and from all the venues, lunch each day, and participation in the full program.

3. For those shuls/communities/groups who wish to bring missions and want to extend their trip either before or after our 4 day mission, that can also be arranged by contacting us at YY50@mizrachi.org, and we - together with our partners - will put together a tailor-made package for your group.

Looking forward to celebrating together – in Jerusalem – on this historic occasion.

With excitement and anticipation,

Rabbi Gideon Shloush
Mizrachi – Religious Zionists of America

Rav Doron Perez
Mizrachi World Movement

Please encourage your community leadership to include the paragraph below in your Shul and School Announcements:

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. On May 22-25 be
Click below to see our video!

POINT OF VIEW

“Men should Wage War and not Women” [Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzva603]

By Rabbi Yisrael Rozen, Dean of the Zomet Institute

“Take off the golden rings that are in the earsof your wives, your sons, and your daughters. And they took off the golden rings that were in their ears.” [Shemot 32:2-3].

“In the ears of your wives – Aharon thought: the women and the children will refuse to give up their jewelry, perhaps this will delay matters and Moshe will come. But they (that is, the men) did not wait, and they took off their own jewelry.” [Rashi].

“Women do not perform work (on Rosh Chodesh)… in memory of the fact that they did not participate in the sin” [Tur Orach Chaim 417, based on Pirkei D’Rebbe Eliezer 44]

The “Levinstein” Festival

As I write these lines, the drama surrounding Rabbi Yigal Levinstein is still at its peak. Perhaps by the time this articleis published the press, the women’s organizations, and liberal public figures will have found some other easy prey. Before I give my opinion about what the rabbi said (below), I want to address the focus of the drama, consisting of a general onslaught of threats against the speaker, with such statements as: “Right now, stop all budgets given to his institution... Do not let him teach... Stop all visits of governmental and military figures in his institution...”
Just in case some of my readers are not familiar with the case, here is a brief background sketch: **Rabbi Yigal Levinstein, an important rabbi in the Eli army prep school** (a magnificent institution that has received great acclaim from military and government sources) had the gall to make a strong declaration against the concept of women serving in combat units. He spoke in a "closed" forum (as if such a concept still exists in this era of secret recordings and immediate leaks) consisting of students of a companion prep school, all of them about to be conscripted and eager to serve. The style of speech was very offensive towards women (something like: “they will be so 'cool' that nobody will want to marry them”). The press immediately pulled from the archives the rabbi’s harsh statements from a few months ago against the homosexual community.

I do not identify with the extremely grating style that I hear, especially when it comes from the mouth of an arabbinal educator within the halls of Torah study. But what can we do? It turns out that this is the usual style of the man: irritating, using common language and especially army idioms, reminiscent of standup comedy as was popularized by the “Gashash He'chiver” entertainment troupe. I surmise that this inferior style of speech was acquired during service in the IDF and not in the Beit Midrash. (As an aside, I am not sure if the previous sentence is a plus for the prosecution or for the defense, or perhaps for both of them at the same time!)

Be that as it may, the press and the women’s organizations were given a juicy fruit as a gift, and the festival began without delay. One of the highlights were some juicy descriptions about an internal competition on Channel 2 to decide which religious reporter would be assigned to interview the rabbi – would it be the man Yair Cherki or the woman Sivan Rahav-Meir? The press revealed “behind-the-scenes tales” as a sub-drama in this affair. (In the end, Sivan won the contest. Just think how we and Channel 2 were saved from the wrath of the women’s organizations if Yair had been chosen.)

**“Terrorism” by the Women’s Organizations**

Let us now turn to Rabbi Yigal’s position. I can go along with the professional opinion that assigning women to combat duty in the armored division will harm the fighting capabilities of the IDF, because of physiological differences between the sexes. Establishing joint combat brigades may well contribute to morale, but in a way that is inversely proportional to military morale, which requires decisive and forceful action. This has to do with tension between the sexes. **The “terrorism of the women’s organizations”** (I have used this term in “closed” sessions, which I assume have been recorded – but no matter, the budget of the Zomet Institute is quite tiny in any case) is willing to sacrifice the needs of security for the greater good of equality and empowerment of women, since these are the ultimate and most absolute values in their world! (I do not accept – in the absence of any proof – the claim that the political left is deeply involved in this issue, as a way of weakening the IDF, similar to the advice of Bilam.)

This feminist terrorism is in attack mode on all possible fronts: Torah conferences where women are not invited to speak; the lack of a woman candidate for General Manager of the religious courts; and soon the demand to allow women to serve as community or city rabbis – since after all there are Orthodox women who have received a title equivalent to “rabbi.” And let us not forget – Torah reading by righteous women at the Western Wall on Rosh Chodesh, since “the women did not sin with the Golden Calf,” as noted in the quotes at the beginning of this article.

However, have no fear! This bulletin that you are reading is protected from the threats of these aggressive women. Women continue to write regularly in the Hebrew and English editions of our pages, as they have done in the past.

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**As Shabbat Approaches**

“He Chooses His Nation Yisrael with Love” [Blessing of Shema]

By Esti Rosenberg, Head of the Midrasha for Women, Migdal Oz

The high point of the prayers during the Ten Days of Awe is reached when Moshe climbs up
The mountain alone, “And He stoodthere with him” [Shemot 24:5]. The Creator of the world is revealed to Moshe, who asks to know His ways. And G-d reveals to him the Thirteen Traits of Mercy. From the heavenly heights of forty days and forty nights on the mountain, Moshe descends with the nation of Yisrael to the great depths of shattered Tablets.

The first reaction of He who gave the Torah is, “Let Me be, and My anger will burn within them, and I will destroy them” [32:10]. A nation which was chosen to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation should never be able to respond to a cry of “This is your god, Yisrael” [32:4] and to dance around a Golden Calf. In His anger, the Holy One, Blessed be He, declares that Moshe is responsible: “… For your nation, which you brought up from the Land of Egypt, has become corrupt” [32:7]. He who chose His nation Yisrael abandons the nation and returns them to Moshe, his chosen messenger.

The image that these verses conjure up is one of a world without forgiveness and compassion, where sinners are totally rejected. In the Garden of Eden too, the Holy One, Blessed be He, had great expectations for Adam and Chavah before man sinned and was expelled. They yearning for the Garden of Eden will continue to be accompanied by a “fiery double-edged sword” [Bereishit 3:24], and the understanding that mankind will not always live up to expectations. A similar process takes place in the time of the Deluge. “And G-d regretted that He had created mankind... And His heart was sad” [Bereishit 6:6]. The Creator regrets His actions, and the trait of truth takes on the role of an accuser.

After the Deluge, the Creator smells the pleasant odor of the sacrifices and understands that He will never again curse the land because of mankind. The yearning for the Garden of Eden and the desire to return to the world as it was before the Deluge serve as a framework for the ability of mankind – created from physical material – to encounter the Creator, who lowers His expectations. At Mount Sinai, the one who gave the Torah decides to give a mission to a nation which will succeed in becoming a kingdom of priests and in fulfilling the will of the Creator. What failed soon after the creation will be mended with the giving of the Torah.

But what a great disappointment arises when the nation of Yisrael do not rise to the occasion. “They have turned away quickly from the path which I commanded them” [Shemot 32:8]. The Tablets, created by G-d, are shattered.

Moshe moves his tent outside the camp. The presence of the Holy One, Blessed be He, within the camp can no longer be taken for granted. “And it will be that whoever wants G-d will come out to the Tent of Meeting” [33:7]. The roles have been reversed. Man will be required to actively seek the Creator in the entire realm of life, the Creator will not be the only one to search. The need to search for the Creator will force mankind to invest, to make an effort, and to better appreciate something that is hard to understand – the Creator yearns for contact with mankind and wants him to be important.

On the other hand, in response to the sin the traits and pathways of the Holy One, Blessed be He, are reborn in a different form. Instead of “Let me be... and I will destroy them,” the Thirteen Traits of Mercy are born. The Creator of the World chooses His nation, and in response to the sin creates forgiveness, repentance, and the traits of mercy. Only through these traits will the Creator and mankind be able to renew their encounter. This will take place in the desert, during public fast days, and every year during the special time of mercy and forgiveness.

“... As You declared to the ancient humble one” [Slichot prayer].

A PARSHA INSIGHT

It is a Sin be too Strict

By Rabbi Asaf Harnoy, Rabbi of "Aderet Eliyahu" Community, Gilo, Jerusalem

It is said that a Chassid used to regularly give part of his profits to his Rebbe, and with G-d’s help his business was very successful. One day he went to his Rebbe’s home, but he wasn’t there. When he asked where the Rebbe was, the members of
the household said that he had gone to visit his own Rebbe, the Seer of Lublin. The Chassid was surprised to learn that his mentor had a Rebbe of his own, and as an experienced businessman he quickly made a logical decision: Why should I give a regular donation to the disciple? I will go to the master, the Seer of Lublin himself.

And from then on, the Chassid visited the Seer directly and stopped going to his local Rebbe. And lo and behold, his business slowly began to fail, until he went bankrupt. The bewildered Chassid went to his Rebbe, the Seer of Lublin, to ask him why his business had failed when he visited him but prospered when he gave his contributions to his local Rebbe. The Seer told him: "As long as you were not so strict about whom you give the money, the heavens also did not go into detail about whether you deserved your success or not. But when you started to investigate and to decide who best deserved your money, they started in heaven to check if there wasn’t somebody else who deserved it more than you..."

"Look at Your Watch!"

The crisis of the Golden Calf which is reported in this week’s Torah portion began because of a misunderstanding between Moshe and the people about the time when he could be expected to return from heaven.

At the very moment that Moshe did not arrive, Bnei Yisrael immediately began the intensive labor of searching for a replacement in the form of a Golden Calf. Even Aharon’s desperate attempt to delay them until the next day was unsuccessful. Bnei Yisrael expected Moshe to arrive precisely "on schedule." And when he did not arrive, the Golden Calf was made – within a few short hours.

If the people had taken a safety precaution and added even one day before making a final decision – everything would have been radically different. Moshe would have arrived at the camp with the Tablets in his hand, and everything would have gone as planned. However, their lack of patience and their stringent attempt to apply the rules with great precision to the moment that they understood Moshe would arrive led to the greatest sin in the annals of the nation of Yisrael.

"Just as He is Patient and not Strict"

Several of the Thirteen Traits of the Holy One, Blessed be He, which appear in this week’s Torah portion, teach us that He shows us great patience and that He is not strict and does not judge us harshly. Even though at times we are evil and we sin, we see that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is patient – He is even willing to let our sins go by without punishing us immediately for every sin.

Rabbi Moshe Kordoviro explains in his book "Tomer Devarim" that the patience of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is so great towards us that even at the very moment that we sin He gives us life, which we then utilize for our own evil purposes.

He Never has an Insulted Reaction

Rabbi Eliezer Ben Hurkoness was one of the greatest of the Tana’im, the masters who wrote the Mishna. He is described as "a pit sealed with lime, which does not lose a single drop" [Avot 2:8]. And we are taught that no man was ever able to come to the Beit Midrash before him.

One year there was a harsh drought in Eretz Yisrael, and Rabbi Eliezer was asked to lead the prayers, in an effort to soften the decree. The people were surprised to see that the rabbi’s prayers were not answered. But when Rabbi Akiva was then sent to lead the prayer, rain started to fall.

All the people in the synagogue were thoroughly shocked when they saw this. They could not understand how it could be that the prayers of the great Rabbi Eliezer went unanswered while Rabbi Akiva received a response. In the end they heard a heavenly voice which said, "It is not that one is greater than the other, rather one of them is never insulted while the other one sometimes reacts in an insulted way" [Taanit 25b].

Rashi explains the term "not to be insulted" as follows: "He did not react in a strict way to those who upset him. He would maintain his traits and continue on his path."
The Holy One, Blessed be He, has a special affinity and love for people who, as He does, do not react to their colleagues for every small act that they perform.

**WHEN THE CHILDREN OPEN THEIR HEARTS**

**Somebody is Watching Me!**

*By Meirav Maggeni, Author of Content and Stories in Chemed, the Religious School System*

There is nothing I like more than to draw. Sometimes I draw a picture from my own imagination, and sometimes I copy pictures that I see in books. I like to color the pictures that I draw with special crayons. Many of my drawings hang on the walls of my room. Sometimes, when I don’t feel like playing with my friends at recess, I stay in the room and draw. And I would like to tell you about one of those drawings, which I made during recess.

This was one of the most beautiful and special drawings I ever made. I saw the original picture in a book of stories about Chassidim, and I felt that I just had to draw it.

Let me describe for you what I drew. There was a horse eating hay standing next to the driver – an angry-looking man wearing a wide hat and holding a whip in his hand. Next to them was the wagon, where an old Rebbe sat with a pesky smile on his face, pointing a finger towards the sky.

I wanted to begin coloring the drawing, but I couldn’t find my crayons. Where could they be? I felt that I had to color the drawing right away and show it to my friends. “They will be very happy with it,” I thought.

I said to myself, “Should I use Channah’s crayons?” She has crayons just like mine, and we are good friends. She would certainly not mind if I used her crayons. I went to her desk and took out a brown crayon from her bag and went back to my drawing. But then I started thinking: “Maybe she won’t let me use her crayons? Maybe she will be angry with me? After all, we are not really allowed to use somebody else’s crayons!” But I was sure that Channah would like my drawing, and that in the end she would not make a fuss. I told myself this, in order to calm down.

I had almost finished coloring the horse. Now I needed a light blue. Should I keep on using Channah’s crayon to color my drawing?

And then I suddenly had a new idea. “Channah won’t even know that I used her crayons. Nobody else will know either. I will only take one more crayon, and that’s it.” But what if she would suddenly come into the room and catch me with her crayon? I put the brown crayon back in Channah’s bag, and I didn’t know what to do next.

Suddenly, my big sister Rivka from the sixth grade came into the room and saw my drawing. She said, “Wow, what talent! I know the story behind the picture that you drew. The old man who drew it was the Rabbi Yisrael – the famous Baal Shem Tov. And this is the wagon driver who took food for his horse without getting permission, and then he had the gall to ask the Baal Shem Tov to keep guard to make sure that he would not be caught...”

But I was not interested in Rivka’s story. “Look,” I said, “if you want me to finish the picture, then I need your help. This crayon belongs to Channah and I am not sure that I have her permission to use it. And I don’t want her to be mad at me. Will you stand at the door and look out for her? If you see Channah coming give me a sign and I will quickly put the crayon back.” Rivka agreed, and she took up a position near the door, looking outside.

I took a light blue crayon from Channah’s bag and I started to color the sky. After a few minutes, Rivka started to yell: “Hurry up, somebody is watching you!”

I jumped up in a panic, and I put the crayon back in Channah’s bag. I hid my drawing under a book, and I went to stand next to Rivka. But I was quite upset. I told her, “Channah is not here...”
“It is said that on one of his journeys the Baal Shem Tov’s wagon passed by a field full of good hay, which the horse would enjoy. The driver thought, ‘This is a great opportunity to feed my horse.’ But he was afraid that the owner of the field would catch him stealing. Therefore asked the Baal Shem Tov to keep watch, and if he would see anybody come close while he was feeding the horse, to shout to the driver and warn him.

“After a few minutes, the Baal Shem Tov started to yell in a loud voice, ‘Somebody sees you! Somebody is looking at you!’ The driver ran away in a panic, pulling along his hungry horse. When he reached the wagon, out of breath, he looked around but he didn’t see anybody. He was quite angry, and he asked the Baal Shem Tov, ‘Who sees me?’ The Baal Shem Tov lifted his finger towards the sky, and he said, ‘The Holy One, Blessed be He, sees you, he is looking right at you!’”

**HOLY AND SECULAR**

The Secret of David Ben Yishai

*By Rabbi Amichai Gordin, Yeshivat Har Etzion*

“He opened up the issues.” The sages use this ambiguous phrase to explain King David’s great success. David Ben Yishai “opened up the issues,” and he therefore succeeded in all that he did. Shaul Ben Kish, the first King, “did not open up the issues,” and he therefore caused evil to occur wherever he turned. (See Eiruvin 53a).

What does “opening up the issues” mean? Rav Kook explains that the dispute between David and Shaul is a disagreement about how to confront opinions that differ from your own. King David had a unique approach, a behavior that brought him success in all his endeavors.

The words of Rav Kook are wonderful, sweet, and important for our confused times. The passage by Rav Kook is worthy of appearing without any further middlemen or interpretation. However, what can we do? The poetic and complex wording used by Rav Kook often prevents many people from directly studying his writings. We therefore bring Rav Kook’s words below with a few added comments.

** * * * *

“The confrontation with opinions that are contrary to our beliefs can take place in two ways. One way is to clearly show the evil consequences of the opposite opinion. We feel that if we show the people the evil side of their approach they will be convinced and move over to our own good path.”

Rav Kook does not like this approach, which almost all of us usually share. He writes, “However, in every bad idea there is a single grain of truth that draws the hearts to accept it. Therefore, even though the attempt to expose the evil is quite logical, as long as all we hear is the evil of the other side the only benefit for the listeners will be to accuse those who have proposed other ideas.”

According to Rav Kook, the only benefit of such an approach will be that those who agreed with us in advance will be convinced that our opponents are inherently evil. How easy it is to persuade the people who are already convinced...

It all seems well and good. The problem is that those who oppose us are aware of the small grain of truth in their approach, and since they are excited by that point of truth they vilify anybody who claims that they are wrong and that they are evil.” Rav Kook makes it clear that
the method of merely pointing out the weaknesses in the approach we do not accept will never convince the others that we are right. And therefore “exposing the evil of those who disagree with us will never bring a total victory. Rather, our opponents will continue to hold their beliefs. They will hold on to their small grain of truth and use it to justify their path.”

All of this happens because the one who is disputing did not expose the full issue but rather focused on the negative aspects of the opposing opinions. As Rav Kook writes, “The one who supports the truth did not expose the full issue.”

Therefore, Rav Kook recommends following the path of King David, since he “would reveal the full and broad picture, and admit that there was a grain of truth in the opinion that he opposed. He exposes the good seed which exists together with the major element of evil. And this means that he exposes that this grain of truth is the reason that those who disagree with him continue to hold on to their opinion, which includes much that is false and bad. In this way, he shows everybody that it is necessary to accept the grain of truth and the good seed which exist in that opinion while keeping away from all the bad things which surround it.” And then, a result that seems magical might come about “Even the opponents will be filled with that which is good. And since they will be better informed than they were before, they will accept the position of the righteous ones who support the general good.”

And this is the path that was followed by David, who sang the praises of G-d so beautifully. “David, who ‘opened up the issues,’ is described as ‘being successful in all his ways’ (see Shmuel I 18:14). The way of David was to expose the wisdom to his opponents in order to lead them to benefit and to recognize the good. In this way they would be able to be wary of bad which sometimes comes to a person when he searches for the correct path.”

(See the notes of Rav Kook, volume 1, page 114. The above quotes have been paraphrased for purposes of clarification.)

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Rav Kook teaches us a very important lesson. We must never fear the truth. If truth is on our side, what is there to fear? Instead of searching for the errors of the opposing side, we should search for the grain of truth in their approach. When we expose the grain of truth and agree to it, all the evil which surrounds it will fall away. We should not be afraid of the fact that we find a single point of truth in the opinions of those who oppose us, we should be very happy about it. Men of truth do not have any fear of the truth that can be found in their opponents’ opinions.

For reactions and comments: benkodesh@gmail.com.

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