

Ki Sisa | Adar 1, 20 -26 | Feb 29 - Mar 6



זֶה אֲנִי יִתְּנֶנּוּ כָּל הָעֵבֶר  
עַל הַפְּקָדִים מִחֲצִיִּית  
הַשֵּׁקֶל בַּשֵּׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ

*Inside:*

## The Two Sets of Tablets

by Rabbi Pinchos Winston

## Lift Your Head

by Rabbi Mordechai Willig

## The Community and the Individual

by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

*and more...*





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## Shabbos Zmanim

2024 Early Friday Mincha, 18 Main  
at מנחה גדולה and every 15 minutes from 12:30pm-3:00pm

|                           |                            |                         |                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| 5:29pm<br>Candle lighting | 5:39pm<br>Mincha in tent נ | 5:39pm<br>Chabad Mincha | 5:47pm<br>Shkiya |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|

**SHABBOS SHACHRIS MINYANIM:**

|   |                              |                             |                                       |                               |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 5:49am<br>Vasikin, followed by a Daf Yomi Shiur 20↑ | 8:00am<br>Shachris 2 18 main | 9:15am<br>Shachris 3 Tent נ | 10:00am<br>Shachris 4 Bais Chabad 20↑ | 10:00am<br>Shachris 5 18 main |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|

|                   |   |                  |                    |                    |
|-------------------|---|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 2:00pm<br>Pirchei | 5:30pm<br>Mincha followed by Shalosh Seudos | 5:48pm<br>Shkiya | 6:28pm<br>Maariv 1 | 6:33pm<br>Maariv 2 |
|-------------------|---|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|

Late Maariv Motzei Shabbos Every 15 Minutes!  
7:00 pm - 9:30pm | 18 Main

## Weekday Zmanim

Zmanim for the week of Mar 3 - Mar 9

Shacharis — 20 min. before Neitz  
Mincha & Maariv — 12 min. before Plag and more (see posted times)

|           | Neitz  | Shma Magen Avraham | Shma Gra | Tefila Gra | Chatzos | Plag   | Shkiya |
|-----------|--------|--------------------|----------|------------|---------|--------|--------|
| Sunday    | 6:27am | 8:36am             | 9:17am   | 10:14am    | 12:08am | 4:38pm | 5:50pm |
| Monday    | 6:26am | 8:36am             | 9:16am   | 10:13am    | 12:08am | 4:39pm | 5:51pm |
| Tuesday   | 6:24am | 8:35am             | 9:15am   | 10:13am    | 12:07pm | 4:40pm | 5:52pm |
| Wednesday | 6:22am | 8:34am             | 9:14am   | 10:12am    | 12:07pm | 4:41pm | 5:53pm |
| Thursday  | 6:21am | 8:33am             | 9:13am   | 10:11am    | 12:07pm | 4:42pm | 5:54pm |
| Friday    | 6:19am | 8:32am             | 9:12am   | 10:11am    | 12:07pm | 4:43pm | 5:55pm |
| Shabbos   | 6:17am | 8:31am             | 9:11am   | 10:10am    | 12:06pm | 4:44pm | 5:56pm |

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# Stubborn People

Once upon a time there was a peddler that went to a wealthy neighborhood to sell his simple wooden spoons. He made sure that the price was nice and cheap as he stood there all day trying to sell his goods. He would scream at the top of his lungs trying to make a sale but he had no luck, no one wanted to buy his products. A kind man observing the situation approached the poor peddler and said to him, "you probably thought it is a good place to sell here because the people have money in a wealthy neighborhood." The merchant nodded. The kind man explained to him that rich people don't like simple wooden spoons; they only want expensive gold and silver utensils. He directed him to a poor neighborhood and there the merchant was successful.

In the *parashat Ki Tisa* due to the sin of the *eigel*, Hashem expresses three times that He is upset at us and uses the term "*am kashei oref*." Hashem calls us a very stubborn nation, literally a stiff neck. Then in the *tefilla* that Moshe prays for Am Yisrael, he requests our forgiveness stating "because we are a stubborn people." Why would Moshe use this defective aspect of the nation in his *tefilla*? The Dubno Magid explains; first Moshe recited the thirteen attributes of mercy and then he asked Hashem where do you need these attributes in the heavens? Why would an angel need mercy? It is clear that all of the attributes are needed for "the people that are stubborn." It is only because we are stubborn that Hashem can express His mercy.

Another way to see stubbornness in a positive light is by viewing it in the future. Moshe Rabbeinu is saying to Hashem, it is true that their stubbornness now is a negative trait, but in the future, it will be necessary. When the nation will be in *galut*, exile amongst the nations of the world this trait will be there to maintain us as a nation through all the challenges of the *goyim*. It is our attribute of stubbornness that will keep us steadfast in our emuna in Hashem. That will guide us in the time of persecution into holding onto our identity.

A chassid and his wife arrived in New York from Russia, en-route to Eretz Yisroel. The Rav of the shul invited the Russian couple to stay with him until their departure to the holy land. The Russian couple had saved up all their money and would make the lifelong dream of moving to Eretz Yisroel when they had the rest of the funds they needed. One day in shul a man stood up to make an appeal for the local *mikvah* that was being built. The Russian chassid quickly pledged all his life savings right then and there. The Rav cried out, "Why are you giving away all your money? You dreamed of living in Eretz Yisroel, without your savings you will be stuck here, penniless!"

The chassid then shared his sad story that illustrated his incredible dedication to *mitzvos*. "My wife and I are childless" the chassid explained, "not due to any medical problems but simply because we had no access to a *mikva*. Each month my wife would count and complete all the required *halachos* in preparation for the *mikvah*, but each month passed and there was nowhere that she could go in communist Russia. Now we finally left that G-dless country but we are both too old to have children. I value *mikvah* so greatly and never would want anyone to be in the predicament we were in. That is why I want to give all my money to this important mission."

May we all have the fortitude to embrace this *mida* properly. Shabbat Shalom



## Putting in an Effort

by Rabbi Daniel Coren

There is an amazing Yerushalmi quoted by the *Torah Temimah* in this week's *parsha*. The Yerushalmi expounds on the verse that says *ויתן אל משה ככלותו* when Moshe finished accepting the Torah. The Yerushalmi explains that Moshe received the Torah as a present. The reason why it was given as a present was because each day of the forty days that Moshe learned with Hashem he would forget what he learned. However, at the end of the forty days, Hashem gave the entire Torah to Moshe as a present. The Yerushalmi goes on to explain that this was to show in the future to all those who think that they can't learn, that if they put in the right effort Hashem gives them the Torah. I heard this also from Rav Goldvicht *zt"l* in the name of the Brisker Rav regarding the words in the Gemara in *Megillah* *יגעת ומצאת תאמן* if you put in effort and then find, you should believe it. The Rav explained that when a person puts in the effort, the wisdom they get is really a finding because ultimately it's not because they are smart; rather, it's because they put in an effort, so Hashem decides at that moment to give them the understanding.

This is a big *chizuk* especially in this generation. Many children are encouraged to study quickly and not put in the real effort of review and trying to understand, and they end up years later not really knowing how to learn, and they think they will never be able to retain and properly understand. The secret to success in learning is this Yerushalmi: put in an effort, because when you do so, Hashem will give the Torah to you as a present.

I was recently speaking to a person; I will call him Moishe. Moishe was frustrated that he wasn't retaining anything, whether it was the *daf yomi* or *mishnayos* or *Nach*, and this was upsetting him. Then he began to review *mishnayos* over and over again. At this point, *mishnayos* began to become familiar to him, and this gave him a bit of happiness, but he wasn't yet satisfied. I asked him how many times he reviewed a particular *Maseches*. He wasn't sure, so I asked did you review 40 times? The answer was no. I told him the Gemara says 40 times review puts the item in your pocket. However, as the Vilna Gaon says, something in your pocket isn't fully secure; you need to check once in a while to make sure it's still in your pocket and didn't fall out. The real secure way to succeed is to review the material 101 times, as the Gemara explains in *Maseches Chagiga*. When we accept this concept, it will inspire us to review more with more excitement, and this in turn this will give us more happiness, and we will be *zoche* to be true *עבדי השם bimhera beyamu with Mashiach tzidkainu*.



# Stop the Stigma of Mental Illness



Rabbi YY Jacobson

We emphasize, accept, respect, and love patients who are physically ill. Yet when it comes to mental illness, many of us shut down. Many people who struggle with mental challenges—chemical disorders, depression, and all other forms of mental challenges—feel that if anyone finds out the truth about them, they will be shunned for eternity. They feel they can't talk to anyone, because nobody will lend them an ear or a heart. They feel that nobody will be there for them. In their minds, we blame them for their problems. As one young man suffering from mental illness told me: "My father told me, 'Just snap out of your issues and get back to normal living. Enough!'"

This is deeply tragic. People do not choose these types of challenges; they are the result of G-d's choices. What they need most is the feeling that they are not victims of the devil, destined to a miserable life. They are powerful souls (neshamos) who can bring light into the abyss of darkness. Our acceptance, respect, and affection for them helps them empower themselves and see themselves from another vantage point.

I heard the following story from the person it happened to. There was a young woman struggling with mental illness. It was very serious, to the point that she was suicidal. After a long ordeal and hospitalization, and much advice from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, her father thanked the Rebbe for "schlepping her out of her deep darkness."

The Rebbe responded: "She was in no dark place that I needed to take her out from there."

When she left the hospital, the Rebbe wrote to her: "From now on, may you serve G-d with joy and gladness of heart."

Trust me, the Rebbe knew very well the seriousness of her condition. He was deeply involved in her entire journey, down to the electric-shock treatment given to her. But, in my opinion, the Rebbe was attempting to give her the feeling that he will never look at her as this "dark, scary soul." He will look at her as a shining piece of G-d who was sent down to this world with infinite power, sent into a very deep space of darkness in order to reveal light there. The Rebbe reminded this person that she is an ambassador of G-d, not a victim of the devil.

Till today, this woman, who has many challenges, lives with a deep sense of purpose, joy and dignity. This is not about denial and being naive. On the contrary, it comes from a broad, sophisticated and Divine perspective, where we do not run away from trauma, pain, and mental illness. We have the courage to stare them in the eyes, and to see the pure light of those souls struggling with something they did not choose.

We have to change our paradigms about mental illness.

Admittedly, sometimes it is very difficult. Unlike the physically ill, individuals with mental illness often say and do very hurtful things to people who love them most. Yet, we must remember, that they are not bad or malicious people; some of them possess the biggest hearts you will encounter on our planet. They were given a trying challenge, beyond what most of us can even fathom. Nor is it our role to become supermen who will heal them. We can't heal them. They must find the tools within themselves (of course with the guidance of true experts in the field) to make their lives manageable and meaningful. But we can embrace them; we can be here for them; allow them to be open with us—and treat them with the dignity they truly deserve.

Womens Shiur **Tuesday** 9:30am (18 Main)  
 Chassidus Shiur **Monday & Thursday** 7:45am (18 Main)  
**Shabbos:** Friday Night – before Barchu (20 Upstairs)  
 Morning 9:00 (20 Upstairs) | After Davening 12:00pm (20 Upstairs)

## UFARATZTA



# Connect to Hashem and Make Better Decisions

... The only suggestion I can make to you is one that may appear mystical, but it has been borne out by experience and proved quite practical. I have in mind the idea that when a Jew strengthens his bond with the Source of wisdom, which is in G-d, he gains wisdom and understanding also in mundane affairs, which helps him to decide what to do and what not to do in matters of business and the like. ...

... May G-d, whose benevolent Providence extends to each and every one individually, grant you the wisdom to make the right decisions...

==== Excerpt of Rebbe's letter Chabad.org



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Just so you should know...







There are two basic reasons given in the *poskim* for the *mitzvah* of *mishloach manos*, and as we will see there are many halachic ramifications that are based on these reasons.

**Food for the Purim Seuda**

The Terumas Hadeshen writes that the purpose of this *mitzvah* is to provide everyone with food for the Purim seuda. The Terumas Hadeshen was asked if a person can give clothing for *mishloach manos*, and he responded that that is not an option. Since the purpose of this *mitzvah* is to provide everyone with food for the Purim seuda, it must be specifically food.

The Chasam Sofer adds that even if the recipient of the *mishloach manos* has more than enough food for the seuda, giving him is still a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *mishloach manos*. He explains that this is because the *mitzvah* was instituted across the board, in order not to embarrass those who are in need.

**Bringing Friendship**

The Bach and the Manos Halevi explain the reason for the *mitzvah* of *mishloach manos* is to bring friendship and closeness between a person and his fellow Jew. Haman had made the claim that the Jews were an “*am mefuzar umeforad*” – they are a nation splintered into many different groups and not living in unity – and were able to be annihilated. To counteract this accusation, Esther told Mordechai – “*Leich kenos es kol haYehudim*” – gather together all the Jews in unity” and that will help us overcome the enemy.

To commemorate this important factor in bringing about our salvation and victory over the enemy, they instituted the *mitzvah* of *mishloach manos*, which brings friendship and closeness between all Jews. This power of unity and harmony will serve to continue to bring us great salvations.

**Nafka Mina Between the Two Reasons – If Receiver Says “No Thank You”**

The Rama writes that if someone sends a *mishloach manos* and the receiver says “no thank you,” he still fulfills the *mitzvah*. The Pri Chodosh wonders why this should be true. He may have had good intentions, but if nothing was received how is this a fulfillment of the *mitzvah*?

The Chasam Sofer explains that this *machlokes* between the Rama and the Pri Chodosh is based on the two ways of understanding the *mitzvah* of giving *mishloach manos*. The Rama understood that the reason for the *mitzvah* is to create unity and friendship between fellow Jews, and the gesture itself of wanting to give a present creates feelings of friendship. Even if the receiver doesn’t accept the present, he will still see that this person is caring about him.

The Pri Chodosh, however, questions that premise. Since there are two ways to understand the *mitzvah*, how did the Rama know to follow that reason? Maybe the reason for the *mitzvah* is to provide food for the receiver for the Purim seuda, and since he did not actually receive anything, the *mitzvah* was not fulfilled.

**Summary**

There are 2 basic reasons for the *mitzvah* of *mishloach manos*: to provide food for the seuda, or to add to friendship, and a possible *nafka minah* will be if the receiver says “no thank you.” If the reason is to add to the friendship, he fulfilled the *mitzvah*, but if the reason is to provide food for the seuda, he did not.

**Rabbi Scheiner**

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- Friday - Shuirim Beinyonei Dyoma and relevant topics

NIGHT KOLLEL | 8:15-9:45pm

- Chavrusa learning - Halacha
- Currently: הלכות שבת

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The Neshama's natural tendency is to strive ever higher. One just has to take advantage of that tendency.

Chafetz Chaim



# Mussar Story

Zichru Toras Moshe

**~Night Kolloel~**  
**The law of the Letter:**  
**Reflections on שטרי הדיקות and secular reading on Shabbos**  
*Rabbi Yisroel Gottlieb*  
 Rav of Bais Torah, Monsey  
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 9:00- 9:45 pm | 18 Main

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## THE NOBLE MAN IN PRISON

Reb Yankele Galinsky, zt"l, tells that when he was in a Siberian prison, one of his cellmates would awaken in the middle of the night, dress in an army uniform, and march about the room, pretending to give demands to people.

One night, Reb Yankele asked him why he did this. The prisoner was embarrassed; he didn't realize that he was being watched. Reb Yankele promised he wouldn't tell anyone, and that he was just curious to know why he was doing this charade.

The prisoner replied, "I was a powerful general in the German army. Hundreds of soldiers were under my command. I don't want to forget my glorious past. I put on my military uniform with all my medals and pretend I'm once again a commander over hundreds of soldiers. This gives me strength to endure the humiliation and affliction we suffer here in this Russian prison."

Reb Yankele would later tell this story to remind us that we Jews are the King's sons and shouldn't forget our glory and pride.

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- 1:00 pm | Tent א
- 1:30 pm | Tent ב
- 2:30 pm | Tent ב
- 3:30 pm | Tent ב
- 4:15 pm | עם קריאת ויחל | Tent ד
- 4:30 pm | Tent ב
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## How Much is a Tzaddik

“כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקֻדֵיהֶם וְנָתַנוּ אִישׁ כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁוֹ לַד' בַּפְּקֹד אַתָּם וְלֹא יִהְיֶה בָהֶם נֶגֶף בַּפְּקֹד אַתָּם.” 30:12

“When you take a census of the B’nei Yisroel according to their numbers, every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul when counting them, so that there will not be a plague among them when counting them.” Klal Yisroel are not to be counted directly, rather they are to be counted through the *Machatzis Hashekel*. Why is this?

Why does the Posuk repeat “בַּפְּקֹד אַתָּם?” Klal Yisroel are not allowed to be counted directly, which was why Klal Yisroel were counted here based upon the *machatzis hashekel* which each and every Yid gave. By counting the *machatzis hashekel*, the count of Klal Yisroel became known. We know that in the times of Dovid Hamelech, Klal Yisroel were counted, and it caused a plague amongst Klal Yisroel. Why are Klal Yisroel not allowed to be counted directly, while other nations of the world can count their people as many times as they want and it has no negative ramifications?

The Gemara in *Bava Basra* 23b teaches us about the din of a רוב, a majority, and there are those who want to come and be *mekatreg* (antagonize/prosecute and seek to have Klal Yisroel punished for their actions) on Klal Yisroel and say that they should all be destroyed because the majority of them are *chayiv*, so they should all be *chayiv*. However, they are quiet

and do not say this, for *tzaddikim* are compared to many, and are not just considered one for this purpose. Yeshaya 60:22 “הַקְטוֹן יִהְיֶה” – There are some *tzaddikim* who are like 1,000 people; there are some who are like 800 people... others like 20... However, the *mekatragim* do not know how to evaluate each *tzaddik*, to know how many people he is equivalent to, and they therefore are quiet, for they do not know if they have a majority or not. Being that these *mekatragim* are quiet, they save Klal Yisroel from much evil.

However, if Klal Yisroel are counted, and each *tzaddik* is counted as one person, then the calculation of each *tzaddik* being much more than one is nullified at that time, and it may be that the majority of Klal Yisroel is bad, thereby giving the *mekatragim* an opening to be *mekatreg* against Klal Yisroel, and cause great harm to them. This is the reason that it is prohibited to count Klal Yisroel directly.

By counting each person as one, it minimizes what the person may actually be, and what he can become. Klal Yisroel have tremendous *kochos*. Moshe Rabbeinu minimized himself; he was the ultimate *anav*, and was always seeking to raise Klal Yisroel. Klal Yisroel and the *Mishkan* were inextricably connected. Each Yid gave a *machatzis hashekel* towards the *Mishkan*, and thereby connected himself to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Chazal tell us that Moshe was compared to all 600,000 of Klal Yisroel. We all have so much within us; we must seek to attach ourselves to the *taryag mitzvos* and the Torah, and then we will be *zoche* to bring forth greatness. Now, we are not *zoche* to have the *Mishkan* to connect ourselves to, but we can still connect ourselves to Hakodosh Boruch Hu through the Torah and *mitzvos*. May we be *zoche* to truly attach ourselves to Hashem through our *avodas Hashem*.

## What Really Counts?

In the marriage of Orthodox Judaism and Western culture that we are witnessing today, it's all about winning. What else matters? Success seems to be measured by achievement only. How much money have you made? Or spiritually, how much have you learned? In many cases we have succumbed to a false theology- we mistakenly believe that it's quantity not quality that counts.

Judaism at its essence teaches us that we must go deeper. *Rachmonah Libah Ba-ee*. It's an important fact for us to know. The good L-rd doesn't measure the world the way we do. Hashem wants quality not quantity..(lit. Hashem wants our hearts).

Let's take a look at what drives us. On the surface it may seem as if we have achieved much with our lives, materially - but if we haven't magnified Hashem's presence in this world, if we haven't lived our day to day lives as ambassadors of truth and light then we haven't truly lived up to our potential. If we have followed the laws but acted inappropriately to those around us, especially to those we love (sometimes in the name of religion), what have we really achieved?

We have followed the script but left out the most important part- our hearts were not really in it, or worse, we may have chosen to be cold hearted and stern, when we needed to be warm and accepting.

It's an old joke- one that we have all heard. But it's full of truth. An Israeli cab driver and a rabbi go up to heaven. The cab driver gets right in.. no waiting. A hero's welcome. The Rabbi is told to wait.

“What” says the Rabbi. I learned, I taught, I led a big congregation.

“He was a simple cab driver.. Why must I wait, while he enters heaven

immediately?”

“Let me explain,” says the angel at the gates.

When you gave your tour d'force, your weekly sermon on Shabbos morning, your congregants slept. When the cab drivers passengers rode with him, they prayed with all their hearts that they would survive the drive!!

From a heavenly perspective things start to look differently. If davening is a time when we quietly reflect on the special relationship we have with G-d then we are on the right track. If we race through the words to “finish” quickly. We have missed the point.

The same goes for our learning. It is a time for us to reflect on the greatness of Hashem. When we learn, Hashem is literally speaking to us. All parts of our existence are subject to the same weather vane.

Making a living and working to raise a family, even household chores, these everyday actions take on a feeling of the divine when we realize that Hashem's presence fills every corner of our lives. What might seem mundane can be elevated to greatness if we would only make it our desire.

It's this marriage of passion and innocence that can bring meaning to our lives. When we live this way we are truly living on the cusp of greatness.

RABBI BEN ZION SNEH





# The Two Sets of Tablets Rabbi Pinchos Winston

G-d said to Moshe, “Carve out two tablets for yourself, just like the first ones ...” (Shemos 34:1)

Well, not exactly. The first set of Ten Commandments that Moshe had descended with at the time of the Golden Calf had not only been inscribed by G-d, but the Tablets themselves had been carved out by G-d as well. Though the “replacement” tablets were also going to be inscribed by G-d, the actual carving out of the tablets, it seemed, was to be Moshe’s doing.

How much of a difference did this make? The difference was as great as that between the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil – all the difference in the world!

This is because G-d’s making of the First Tablets represented their having emanated from a higher source, one which is outside the realm of evil. Embodied in these tablets was the Hidden Light of creation, which shone briefly during the six days of creation, and then was hidden again after Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Bringing the First Tablets down from Heaven was the same as returning this supernal light to physical creation. When these tablets were broken because of the sin of the Golden Calf, the light returned to its “hiding place.”

And though Moshe’s prayer on behalf of the Jewish nation after the incident was enough to avoid Divine wrath, it had not been enough to return the First Tablets and the light revealed through them. Instead, Moshe was told to create new tablets from the physical world itself, tablets which could not shine with this holy light, and therefore were not above the world of evil. For this reason, the Second Tablets were considered to be on the level of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

In fact, had the Jewish people not transgressed with the Golden Calf (which meant not preventing the *Erev Rav* from constructing it), Torah would have been revealed to everyone on the most sublime level from the time it was given. This was because all of creation would have been elevated back to the level it had been on before Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It was only the episode of the Golden Calf that resulted in a Torah that is hidden behind words that do not directly reveal their Divine wisdom, demanding instead that we labor intellectually and spiritually to learn, comprehend, and retain Torah (*Eiruv* 54a).

On the other hand, though the holy letters of the First Tablets flew back to Heaven, and the tablets themselves had been reduced to dust, still, they had been placed inside the *Aron HaKodesh*.

What does this mean? It means that, even though we are starting off on a much lower spiritual level than we would have had we been able to possess the First Tablets, still, there is a connection, albeit a tenuous one, to the light of the First Tablets. This is why the Sages could teach with confidence:

“The Tablets were the work of G-d and the writing was that of G-d engraved (*charus*) on the Tablets.” Don’t read *charus* (engraved), but *cheirus* (freedom), for there is no one freer than one who studies the Torah. (*Pirke Avos*, 6:2) Clearly this statement refers to the tablets carved by G-d – the First Tablets. Then what relevance does this teaching have to us, the Second Tablet community?

The answer is, the Second Tablets were not just a replacement for the First Tablets, but a medium through which to access them. Just as eye glasses act as a corrective device for one whose vision has become impaired, so too did the Second Tablets act as a “corrective device” to help us recover what was lost when Moshe broke the First Tablets.

And this is precisely what we try to achieve every time we sit down to learn Torah.

## The Half-Shekel of Fire Rabbi Yissochar Frand



This week’s *parsha* contains the *mitzvah* to donate the half-shekel coin: “This shall be given by everyone who passes through the counting, from twenty years old and up, a half shekel from the holy shekel coin, the shekel weighing twenty *geirah*, a half shekel as gift to Hashem.” [Shemos 30:13-14] Rashi cites a *Medrash* that says that G-d showed Moshe the appearance of a coin made from fire weighing a half-shekel and told him “This is what they shall give.”

Rashi actually abbreviates the *Medrash*. The *Medrash* itself mentions that Moshe had difficulty envisioning what exactly the half-shekel coin looked like, and G-d therefore showed him a heavenly vision of exactly the way it appears. The commentators are bothered by this – why was it so difficult for Moshe to envision the appearance of this half-shekel coin?

The Gemara has a similar narration concerning the

menorah. The menorah has very intricate detail and geometric configuration. We can understand how Moshe might not have been able to picture what the menorah looked like until he was shown an example of a fiery menorah in a vision. Likewise, the Talmud says that Hashem had to show Moshe examples of the reptiles and insects (*sheratzim*) mentioned in *Parshas Shmini*. That statement can also be understood. But what is so hard to envision about a coin? Why did G-d have to show Moshe a coin made out of fire?

I will share one answer to this question based on *derush* [homiletic interpretation] and another answer based on *pshat* [simple interpretation].

This homiletic interpretation is offered by many. I saw it most recently in the *Oznaim LaTorah*. Moshe Rabbeinu



# LIFT YOUR HEAD Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Hashem said to Moshe, "When you will raise the head of *Bnei Yisrael* (*Shemos* 30:11,12)." The verse (*Tehilim* 3:3) "Many say of my soul, 'There is no salvation for him from Hashem forever'" speaks of the nations of the world who say, "A nation that heard at Sinai, 'I am Hashem your G-d, you shall not have other gods' (*Shemos* 20:2,3), and forty days later said 'These are your gods, Yisrael' (32:4), can they have salvation? There is no salvation for him [Yisrael] forever!" But You, Hashem, are a shield for me, the One who raises my head (*Tehilim* 3:4); we were guilty of a capital offense punishable by severing of the head, but You protected us and instead raised our head through Moshe as it says, "When you will raise the head" – *Tanchuma* 4.

*Am Yisrael* was despondent after committing the sin of idolatry a mere forty days after *kabolas HaTorah*. The nations scoffed at us, predicting that we could never be saved. Yet, after our precipitous decline from the highest spiritual point in our history to the depths of sin and despair, Hashem, through Moshe, raised our heads. He commanded us to build the *Mishkan*, using our *shekalim* to achieve atonement for our sins, including the Golden Calf.

The *Tanchuma* interprets the *pesukim* in *Tehilim* as referring to the personal sin of David Hamelech as well.

*Many (Do'eg and Achitofel) say of me, "One who captured the sheep and killed the shepherd (i.e. who married Batsheva and killed her husband Uriah and Am Yisrael by the sword of war), can he be saved from his son Avshalom (Tehilim 3:1)? There is no salvation for him (David) forever!" But You, Hashem, are a shield for me, in the merit of my ancestors, as You said to Avraham, "I am a shield for you" (Bereishis 15:1). I was guilty of an offense punishable by severing of the head, but You raised my head through Nossan the prophet. When I said, "I have sinned to Hashem" he said "So, too, Hashem has set aside your sin, you shall not die" (Shmuel II, 12:13).*

David *Hamelech* was undoubtedly devastated when he recognized, and confessed to, the enormity of his sin. His enemies were certain that his punishment, the rebellion of

Avshalom, would be fatal. But Hashem protected David from Avshalom and restored his kingdom. His confession granted atonement for his sin, and He merited an eternal dynasty.

*Am Yisrael* was guilty of idolatry, and David's sin bordered on immorality and murder. If *teshuva* is effective for the three cardinal sins for which one must give up his life, it can certainly atone for lesser sins.

When a person sins, the *yetzer hara* says to him, "Your situation is hopeless. There is no point in attempting to correct your mistake. Since you are spiritually doomed, continue in your sinful ways and enjoy life. You have nothing to lose." *Parshas Ki Sisa* combats this insidious notion. The *Tanchuma* interprets *Ki Sisa* in the future tense. When we read it every year, it is as if Moshe stands there and raises our heads. The eternal lesson of the atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf is that no situation is hopeless!

Every person has moments of spiritual angst. Some commit serious sins, others commit lesser ones. Many realize that they are not *davening* and/or learning Torah properly. Most recognize that they are not actualizing their full potential, neither in serving Hashem nor in helping others. The Satan says "It is too late to change or improve." When this happens we must remember the timeless message of *Ki Sisa*. In the absence of prophecy, we must, with the help of our spiritual leaders, lift up our own heads. Despair is a tool in the arsenal of the *yetzer hara*, and must be avoided in all circumstances.

Individually, we must emulate David; collectively, we must emulate *Am Yisrael* who atoned for their grievous sin by building the *Mishkan* with their *shekalim*. By overcoming the *yetzer hara* and lifting our heads, may we speedily merit the coming of *Mashiach* ben David and the rebuilding of the *Bais Hamikdash*.



had difficulty understanding how money could serve as an atonement (*kaparah*). Money is the root of most evil. However, Hashem speaks of the half-shekel donation being '*keseifahakipurim*' [the money of atonement]. Moshe wanted to know how that could happen. How could something that is the cause of so much evil and trouble serve to bring man closer to His Maker?

Therefore, G-d showed him a coin made out of fire. Is fire good or bad? Fire can be the most destructive thing in the world. It can kill. It can decimate. On the other hand, where would we be without fire? We would freeze in the winter. We would not be able to prepare our food. The world would not be able to exist without fire. We see that there are things in this world that can bring tremendous good, and at the same time can bring tremendous evil. They can bring tremendous improvement and tremendous destruction. The point of showing Moshe the coin made out of fire was to equate money with fire. Money, too, can be destructive or constructive, depending upon how it is used.

An interpretation that is more straightforward and closer to the pshat is offered by Rav Simcha Zissel, the Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron, zt"l: Moshe Rabbeinu understood that there are things in this world that are called "*cheftzah shel mitzvah*" [items with which *mitzvos* are performed]. Some things are natural products (e.g. — *lulav, esrog, haddasim, aravos*). Other things are "manufactured" (e.g. — cowhide may be made into a *Sefer Torah, tefillin, or mezuzah*). Although the latter are man-made products, the intent of the scribe in creating them may make them holy and allow them to become a "*cheftzah shel mitzvah*". Moshe did not have trouble understanding this.

However, Moshe could not understand how it is possible to do a *mitzvah* with a coin that is minted for commercial purposes. How is this piece of metal, which is minted by secular authorities, able to become a "*cheftzah shel mitzvah*"? Therefore, Hashem showed him the coin of fire, and thereby informed him that in fact even such an item could be sanctified and used for achieving atonement, as long as it is given for the sake of a *mitzvah*.

## All Together

Rabbi Shalom Rosner



In this week's *parsha* we find a description of the *ketores*. It was composed of eleven spices, and included in it was the *helbina*, which had a rather foul smell. Rashi explains that this is symbolic of including sinners among the members of our congregation on fast days.

Why is it so important to include the sinners in our davening? What are they adding? Imagine, we are getting ready to begin Kol Nidre on the eve of Yom Kippur and the Rav of the shul looks around the room and then steps outside to pull in some *avaryanim* (transgressors), so we can begin the Yom Kippur service. Why is this such a crucial element, without which the Talmud states a fast day would not be considered a fast day (Krisus 6b)?

Drash Dovid explains as follows. If we view Am Yisrael simply as a group of people comprised of a number of parts, then we would focus on the quality of each individual. Each quality individual adds to the goal. However, Am Yisrael is not just a group of individuals that come together, rather we are considered a *guf ehad* – one body or unit. That is why one individual can fulfill a *mitzva* on behalf of another. If I am missing a body part, I am lacking something. If I have a body part that is somewhat impaired, it is still better to retain that body part. Without that body part, I am blemished. Similarly, it is better to include the sinner, as he is still a member of Am Yisrael. Just as I am better off with a slightly impaired limb, so too I am better off as a nation with including a sinner rather than excluding him.

The Drash Dovid offers an additional insight. It seems from several statements of *Chazal*, that it is not just for the benefit of uniting the nation, but there seems to be something more. It is beneficial for the righteous themselves to include the transgressors. Somehow, even the *tzadikim* are uplifted by including the sinners. How does that work? As an example, we are required to take the four species. If we lack one of the 4 *minim*, we cannot fulfill the *mitzva* at all. It is not just having them as a unit – but only when they are taken together, they are uplifted to enable one to fulfill the *mitzva*. *Chazal* say – they each bring *kappara* for the other (Vayikra Raba 30:12).

When we have a *tzibbur*, everyone brings out the best in each other. When the sinners are present, they become recipients of the teachings of the *tzadikim*, who in turn are affected by their own teaching. Every Jew has untapped powers within him. When inspired, perhaps that hidden flame can be ignited. That is what the *helbina* accomplishes. Its foul smell is not swallowed and overpowered in the concoction of the other 10 spices, rather, the *helbina* brings out the best smell of the other spices. Similarly, the presence of the sinners brings out the best in the other members of the *kahal*. Either by being inspired by their joining, or through instructing the less observant, all benefit from their presence.

May we be respectful, accepting and welcoming to individuals whom we feel are less observant or who have different ideological beliefs, so that we can not only unite as a people, but so that we can each benefit and bring out the best in every individual.

## The Community and the Individual

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

**“When you take a census of the Children of Israel...” (30:12)**

This census, the first conducted by the Jewish people, reflects the notion that we had achieved the necessary critical mass to be defined as a community. Being counted as a community meant that we had been elevated from individuals who required the infrastructure and support systems of others, to a self-sufficient unit with the ability to retain its own identity and ensure its survival and continuity. While the previous two *parshios* deal with the erecting of the Mishkan in our midst, *Parshas Ki Sisa* addresses our becoming a community.

Although many of the vessels contained copper which was donated by the general populace, the Torah specifically identifies that the *kiyor* (laver) was made exclusively from the polished copper mirrors contributed by the women. Moshe was reluctant to accept these mirrors, deeming it inappropriate to construct a sacred vessel from items that were used to elicit lust, but Hashem revealed to Moshe that it was these very mirrors that were instrumental in ensuring the survival of the Jewish people. Returning from the back-breaking labor inflicted upon them by their Egyptian taskmasters, the Jewish men were too exhausted to engage in marital relations. Fearing for the survival of the nation, the women used these mirrors to make themselves desirable in their husbands' eyes, thereby guaranteeing the continuity of the Jewish people. Therefore, Hashem told Moshe that there cannot be a more befitting contribution for the *kiyor*. All the other gifts are recorded as being given on an individual basis, yet the mirrors were given as a group, “*asher tzavu*” – “that gathered together,” for they were given with a sense of community. These women who understood the importance of ensuring the survival of the Jewish nation offered their contributions with the same communal sensitivity. The *kiyor*, therefore, represents the importance of preserving Jewish continuity and symbolizes the efforts required to enable the formation of Jewish communal life. Consequently, its construction appears in *Parshas Ki Sisa* and not together with the construction of the other holy Vessels.

Including the foul-smelling *chelvena*, galbanum, in the *ketores* defines for us the requirements of a community. A Jewish community can only be referred to as a community if there is no segment being excluded. As a community, we have a responsibility to focus upon the needs and welfare of each individual, not just those who share common ideologies and interests with us. If we segment ourselves and become polarized, we transform from a community into a cult. It is therefore a prerequisite on Yom Kippur eve, prior to receiving our communal atonement, to declare that we are gathered together to pray with all members of the Jewish community, none being excluded. Excluding any member would prevent us from being afforded the special dispensations of atonement that are granted exclusively to a community.

Whereas the *kiyor* represents the sociological aspects of community such as Jewish continuity and self-preservation, the *ketores* reflects the manner in which the individuals within the community should relate to one another. Both the *kiyor* and the *ketores* are recorded in *Ki Sisa*, the *parsha* in which we are counted as a community, for they represent the integral elements that contribute to and define the Jewish community.







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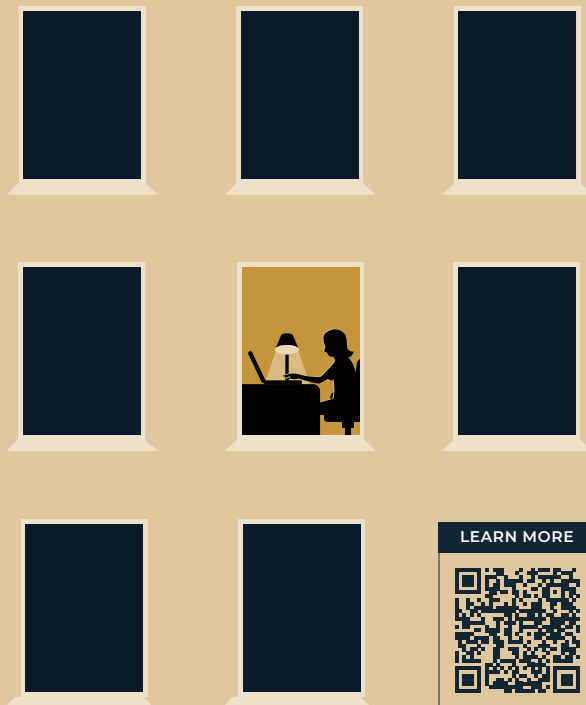
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# JOKES

## **Tie the Horse Up**

A merchant rode around a town 150 years ago and his horse became untied. This is not so funny, because it's very unpleasant when a horse gets untied, because it can run away or get stuck with a cart, and it's even worse than now without gas in an unknown place. This Jew sees a place nearby, he takes this horse, goes to this place and says: "Tie this horse up properly", and they reply: "Well, this requires a specialist, but it's a small town, and there is no such specialist." He says: "Well, what should I do? Help me!" They tell him: "We have an idea. Go to our rabbi, he probably can tie up a horse." He says: "Are you kidding me? This is a horse. What does the rabbi have to do with it?" They answer: "Well, you know, our rabbi ties everything to the weekly Torah portion, he will probably be able to tie your horse up too."

## **My Newspaper Was Different**

A customer walked into my clothing shop and asked to see the pants that were advertised in the paper that day. "We don't have an ad in the paper today," I told her. He insisted I was wrong, so I got a copy of the paper, and we went through it, eventually landing on an ad for pants from another local store. Exasperated, the customer glared at me and said, "In my newspaper, the ad was for this store!"

## **Some Assembly Required**

A man bought a new gadget -- unassembled, of course -- and after reading and rereading the assembly instructions still couldn't figure out how it went together. Finally, he sought the help of an old handyman working in the backyard. The old fellow picked up the pieces, studied them, and then began assembling the gadget. In just a few minutes he has it all put together.

"That's amazing," said the man. "And you did it without even looking at the instructions!"



The handyman replied, "Fact is, I can't read, and when a fellow can't read he's got to think."

## **The Farmer**

A Texas farmer was touring England. He happened to meet an English farmer and asked him, "What size farm do you have?" The Englishman proudly announced, "Thirty-five acres!" "Thirty-five acres?" the Texan scoffed. "Why I can get in my truck at 8:00 AM and start driving and at noon, I am still on my farm. I can eat lunch and start driving again and at 5:00 PM I am still on my farm." "Ah, yes," the Englishman nodded in understanding. "I had a truck like that once."

## **Babysitter**

My wife and I had the best babysitter. She would wash, dry, and put away the dishes; clean the house; and even help with the laundry after putting our kids into bed.

Once, we were getting ready to go out for the evening, and my wife was embarrassed because she had let the dirty laundry pile up.

Before we left, she threw all our dirty clothes into the dryer so the babysitter wouldn't see it.

You can imagine our surprise when we returned to find all our dirty clothes folded neatly in the laundry room!



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