



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

It is an honor to present this week's Torah Minute from our archives. The following was penned by our founder, Rabbi Kalman Winter ZT" L.

This week's Torah reading of Ki Sisa features the national transgression of the Golden Calf. The Jewish nation at its most glorious moment, the receiving of the Torah at Sinai from G-d, violates the most ignoble of all transgressions - idolatry. How are we to understand that a people called the "Dor Daya" - the Generation of Knowledge, who beheld all the miracles in Egypt and safely crossed the Sea into a barren wilderness, should lose its faith in the One G-d? It begs understanding.

The Torah commentators say that the Torah records that the Jews miscalculated when Moshe was to reappear to them from his forty days on high. There ensued great fear and panic in the Jewish camp that Moshe had died. Striving to regain their footing and searching for another intermediary like Moshe who would serve as a leader and contact between G-d and His people, they divined means and ways mystically to create this Golden Calf. Never did they intend to replace G-d, rather it was an effort to find a substitution for their leader, Moshe. In fact, there were efforts made that Aharon himself should assume the leadership of his brother, Moshe.

Given that their intention was not idolatrous, wherein is to be found their transgression? The answer lies in the fact that with all their best intentions, they failed to act with due deliberation and faith. Tested as they were, they should never have undertaken such an initiative without the directive and approval of the Almighty Himself.

This is a historical message for all future generations that our good intentions do not give license to improvise and change. There have been many golden calves with their innovations throughout our long history. All have failed the test of time. Our Torah is a living Torah, one that speaks for all generations. Moshe did reappear, our leader returned and our glory reinstated. All that grief and angst of the Golden Calf was but for naught. Ours is but to do, not to alter and embellish, even with the best of intentions.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Hashem passed before him and proclaimed, "Hashem, Hashem..." (34:6)

This refers to Hashem's attribute of mercy. These two mentions of Hashem's name, one is before a person has sinned, and one is after a person has sinned (Rashi).

If a person will not sin in the future, there is no need for the Torah to tell us that Hashem will act mercifully to the person. Therefore, this verse must be referring to a situation where Hashem knows the person will sin in the future. Still Hashem will act mercifully. This is understandable on account of that which Hashem always judges a person based on his present situation (Vayeira 21:17). However, once a person has sinned, why would Hashem act mercifully to him? Albeit the person may repent, but according to his present state he is a sinner!

Parsha Riddle

Where in the Parsha is the source that one should wash one's hands before davening?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

How do we benefit from the fact that the Romans stole the Bigdei Kehuna instead of destroying them?

Answer: Since the Bigdei Kehuna are still in existence they can still create atonement for B'nei Yisrael.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Ki Sisa* (32:27), Moshe Rabbeinu ordered the Levites to execute those who had sinned with the Golden Calf: "Let every man kill his brother, every man his fellow, and every man his near one." Upon Moshe's deathbed (*Devarim* 33:9), when he blessed the tribe of Levi, he recalled and praised this single-minded devotion to Hashem:

The one who said of his father and mother, 'I have not favored him'; his brothers he did not give recognition and his children he did not know; for they [the Levites] have observed Your word and Your covenant they preserved.

Rashi explains: When they sinned in the matter of the golden calf and I said, "Who is on the L-rd's side, let him come to me," all the sons of Levi gathered themselves unto me, and I ordered them each to kill his mother's father, he being an ordinary Israelite, or his brother on the mother's side, or the son of his daughter whose husband was an ordinary Israelite, and thus did they do. — It is impossible to explain the term "his father" literally, and "his brothers" as being those on his father's side, and similarly to understand "his sons" literally, for really all these are Levites, and of the tribe of Levi no one sinned, as it is said, "[And there gathered unto me] all the tribe of Levi."

Had the fathers of any of Moshe's Levite followers actually sinned, it would seem that their sons would not have been allowed to kill them unless they had been guilty of inciting others to worship the Calf. The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 85a-b) records a discussion of whether "a son may be designated an agent of the court in order to flog his father or to curse him if the court sentenced him to ostracism," and its ultimate conclusion is:

With regard to all cases a son is not designated as an agent to strike his father or to curse him, except in a case where his father incites others to worship idols, as the Torah states: "Neither shall you spare, nor shall you conceal him" (*Devarim* 13:9).

So in general, a son is not supposed to mete out punishment to his father, and this is apparently so even when the father has committed an egregious sin as idolatry, unless he is guilty of incitement to idolatry.

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I caused plagues.
2. For me some use a verse.
3. Sometimes a half shekel.
4. I give you numbers.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I was bright.
2. Even though it wasn't Purim, I wore a mask.
3. I am from the small "Aleph".
4. I was misunderstood as horns.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Meil (I make you knock, I fix your speech, I had the bells but not the whistles, My pomegranates were not full of seeds.

#2 Tzitz (I could mean to shine, I could mean to look, I caused atonement, I proclaimed holiness.)

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