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Parshah Ki Tisa
by Julie Zhuk on 2023-03-11

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Exodus 30:11-34:35

The Golden Calf PG 165

In this parsha G-d gives to Moses instructions that have to do with the Tabernacle. The first thing G-d wanted Moses to do was take a count of all the men that were around. G-d was talking specifically about the Jewish people. In Hebrew the name of the parsha translates to census and that is where the idea of counting the men came from. The way this was done was Moses collected half a silver shekel from each man. There was a purpose for these silver coins, it was used to purchase the sacrifices that were offered on behalf of the people as a whole group. Once this was done, G-d told Moses to build an urn that was used by the priests. They would be washing their hands and their feet before officiating in the Tabernacle.

They would do this to make and use the anointing oil and incense when appointing to oversee the actual building of the Tabernacle. They also did this when they fashioned the furnishings and utensils of the Tabernacle. This all happened after the Jews sinned by making a Golden Calf. Surrounding this group of Jewish people there were some artisans and their job was to make a Laver. It was a large urn filled with a lot of water and had two sprouts that the priests would be using to wash their hands and feet. They would do that and then they would come into the Tabernacle and start their officiating procedures. G-d didn't want the Jews to have any kind of Laver, but a copper one. The purpose for that was spiritual refinement has different stages, when the priests came into the Tabernacle and performed the rites that were associated with its furnishings that reflected these stages, it was forbidden to follow as part of our ascent on the ladder of spiritual renewal and growth. This meant when people came into the Tabernacle, first they went through the Courtyard.

The first thing they would see is the Laver (the urn) and this teaches us that whenever we leave any mundane affairs we have, first we have to cleanse ourselves of having any materialistic orientation. If any of these materialistic things are lingering around in our consciousness as a result of our most recent encounters with the mundane world. Washing the hands and feet from this urn, is important to do before facing the spiritual consciousness that is associated with the Tabernacle. People would expect for the Laver to be located outside of the Tabernacle or at most at the threshold part of it, instead of inside of the Tabernacle itself. The importance of the Laver being inside teaches Jews that the purification from material stuff starts when humans are outside of something so spiritual such as the Tabernacle. This way we don't have anything mundane to pursue and we can focus on being in a spiritual realm. If humans approach our mundane affairs from the perspective of the Torah, we can sanctify them. We are also cleansing ourselves of the material world, even if we are "outside" of our inner Tabernacle. Using the Laver to wash serves as a complete process that Jews will begin while still in the midst of our mundane existence.

This parsha has already moved on past the incident with the Jews and the Golden Calf. The Jews already messed up, but it is mentioned here that G-d told the Jews how long he was going

to be away for. There was some kind of a misunderstanding between Moses and the Jews. The Jews waited past the date that Moses told them he would come back and they ran out of patience. The Jews had mistakenly counted the first day that Moses left as a half day of the forty-day count. That was where the mix up came from, and since there was no way to track some people thought the worst. They thought maybe he died and not knowing what to do, the Jews put their minds together and some of them came up with the idea of forming this Golden Calf. This idea of having a Golden Calf was a way to substitute for Moses.

Back then around this crowd of Jews, Aaron was seen as the holiest person. The Jews thought that G-d would definitely consent to communicate through this gold figurine. Aaron was opposed to this idea. He was working slowly to gain the trust of his brother Moses. Aaron was patiently waiting for Moses to return, but the Jews had already run out of patience. This was one of the reasons why Aaron was rushed through his work, finally, the golden calf was finished. When it was done, there were a group of Jews who worshiped it as an idol.

The whole time the Jews were waiting for Moses, G-d was talking to Him. He covered important matters and before leaving Mount Sinai, G-d gave Moses two Tablets of the testimony. Moses got the Tablets on the fortieth day while he was still up on Mount Sinai, at this point the Jews had already made the Golden Calf. They did that on the 39th day, even after the Jews had already committed such a horrible transgression, G-d still wanted to teach the Torah to Moses. He still wanted Moses to have the tablets so it could be transmitted in the Torah to all of the Jews. The parsha teaches us that we need to always see other people in their best light. We need to encourage them to study the Torah and to fulfill G-d's commandments even if their actions seem to contradict the wishes that G-d had. When G-d had discovered what the Jews did by creating the Golden Calf, He wanted Moses to destroy the Jewish people. G-d wanted to hold the majority of the people responsible because they didn't prevent the minority from worshipping the Golden Calf.

Moses was standing on the mountain with G-d and he pleaded to G-d to forgive the Jews. G-d agreed to this only to punish the guilty minority, still, G-d insisted that in their presence he could no longer help the Jews. When Moses came down the mountain and saw those who were worshipping the Golden Cal, Moses understood that the Jews weren't ready to hear the Torah. Not yet, so Moses threw down the tablets. He broke them and then went back up to Mount Sinai. He stayed there an extra forty days, and he was able to get G-d to grant forgiveness even to those who worshipped the Golden Calf. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, Moses again asked G-d to once more let His presence be around the people. G-d loved Moses so much, that he went through with that plan. G-d agreed to dwell among the Jews. The parsha tells us that every Jew has a Divine soul, we are all bound to G-d. We are incapable of denying that connection or even wanting to deny it. We can go against the will of G-d only when our mind is overtaken by an illusion that we can ignore the bond.

Deep down, humans have to stay faithful to the intrinsic bond that we have with G-d. We know that the illusion when we ignore the connection we have with G-d is just a ruse. We are always able to rely on, renew, and reinstate the relationship we have with G-d. Everything that G-d was doing in front of Moses was out of kindness. G-d was showing a side of kindness that He had. G-d told Moses that it is only possible for the human mind to grasp this from the back, i.e, after the fact. When G-d said the words "His back" he was speaking allegorically, He was talking

about the use of tefillin that Jewish men have. The connection that we have to G-d can be envisioned metaphorically as a multi-stranded cord that is tied to us on one end and to G-d on the other. When Jews transgress, we cut one of these strings that compose the cord connecting us to G-d. In order for us to ask for forgiveness, Jews have to strengthen the commitment we have to G-d.

This is literally all coming from the same resource, Daily Wisdom 2. From my understanding the message here is, hindsight is 20/20, we don't see the goodness G-d has for us until after something in our lives has happened. Whatever it was that happened leaves us unsettled, and dissatisfied, and it's hard for us to learn to adjust. We go through a period of hardship, it's a great growth period for us. After this, in the midst of the hardship that we are going through, we realize that G-d only wanted to do something good for us. This is referring to how our transgressions go against the will G-d has for us. Jews have to tie a knot exactly where the string was cut and joining two pieces of a severed string with a knot will create a much stronger connection between the two pieces before it was even connected the first time before there was a cut placed there. The parsha talks about the process of repentance, G-d had shown Moses specifically the knot of the tefillin.

Tefillin is expressing the connection we have to G-d. The knot teaches Jews that when it is important to repair the connection with G-d, we have to strengthen our observance of Judaism. We have to raise our awareness that G-d is always around in our lives. If we strengthen our connection to G-d, we will bring the messianic Redemption faster, and G-d's presence will be openly revealed. It will no longer be important to remind ourselves of this reality. When we get to the fifth reading of this week's parsha, G-d has asked Moses to come back to Mount Sinai. Moses is to stay there for a third time for forty days. During this stay, G-d reveals His thirteen attributes of mercy. G-d is invoking these attributes to Moses, it is from these attributes that we know G-d will always no matter what forgive the Jews. G-d told Moses that He was going to preserve kindness for two thousand generations. G-d will always remember the premeditated transgressions that the Jewish people's forefathers committed. G-d commented about the Ten Commandments.

G-d said it in the opposite order, starting with He is G-d who remembers the premeditated sins of the fathers. G-d went on to say that he showed kindness for two thousand generations. It is in the Ten Commandments that G-d says He shows kindness, in the passage here he is saying He preserves that same kindness. The first kind of kindness that G-d is talking about is He shows someone who has done something wrong. This type of person will need kindness coming from G-d to rectify his wrongdoings. This kind of kindness is referred to in the Ten Commandments as G-d "showing kindness." Even after the Jewish forefathers transgressed, G-d still showed a sign of kindness. G-d is not only showing His kindness, He lets us know how much He loves us. This kindness is mentioned before any mention of a Jew transgressing.

This is why G-d describes Himself as "preserving." He is storing up His kindness for us to have under any circumstance. After showing this side of kindness, G-d renews the covenant He forged with the Jews. This all happened at Mount Sinai, that area had been rendered null and void by the transgression of the Golden Calf. The last part of the parsha focuses on us purifying our thoughts, our speech, and our actions. G-d told Moses that He was going to make a

covenant with the Jews. The Jewish people broke the promise they had made at Mount Sinai. That promise was to serve G-d faithfully, in this new covenant. It became important because the original covenant applied even if the people were not faithful or connected with Him regardless of how well the Jews kept His commandments.

The way to make this covenant work, G-d had to show a much deeper level of His connection to the Jews. This connection would stay intact even if they didn't obey all of His laws. Moses had a feeling G-d would declare to the Jews that the way to stay connected to Him would be by keeping His commandments. This is what made Jewish people so unique and stand out from the other nations, they would be observing the laws that G-d had placed in front of them. Moses thought for sure the other nations would claim that observing these laws G-d had didn't matter, and they could still have the same kind of closeness to G-d just like the Jews who were following through with the laws G-d put in front of them. These other nations believed G-d would give them the same love and respect as He had for the Jewish people. For the Jewish people to follow through with the laws

G-d had set out for them, Moses reached out to G-d and asked Him to place His unique presence on the Jews. There were implications to the renewed covenant that G-d had with Himself and the Jews. He wanted the non-Jews to be motivated and encourage their Jewish friends to appreciate and stay faithful to their heritage. Also, to work with them to fulfill G-d's Divine plan for humanity. Moses stayed on Mount Sinai for about forty days, during this time his physical body had angelic type qualities. He didn't need to eat anything or drink anything either. The last part of the parsha tells us humans need physical food to nourish the body. The Torah is used to internalize and nourish the Divine soul that everyone has. When Moses was up there on Mount Sinai, he didn't need to consume physical food, because he was at the top of Mount Sinai. He had consumed enough "spiritual food" by spending the entire time learning Torah.

He was learning directly from G-d Himself. Moses is referred to as being on Mount Sinai in the Psalms. It says there that a mortal man ate the bread of the angels. This meant that the angels had whatever G-d allowed them to understand about Him. The angels were internalizing this comprehension and it fuels their existence. The angels felt a type of delight in what they were taking in. It inspired them to find a Divine ecstasy and it was there that they were singing songs of praise to G-d. That was their way of expressing gratitude to G-d and when Moses was on Mount Sinai, he also subsisted on his understanding of Divinity and the delight accompanying this comprehension. That spiritual nourishment of delight we can experience it when studying the Torah. If we approach the study of the Torah in the way that Moses did, we will hear the words of the Torah coming directly from G-d.