

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Ki Tisa	23 Feb 2019	18 Adar I 5779	Exo 30:11-34:35	1King 18:1-39	Mark 9:1-10

In this week's Torah portion Ki Tisa, we read the Children of Yisrael sin against Hashem by making a Golden Calf. We learned in detail last year why and how they sinned. For this week's *parasha*, we will discuss their behaviors by focus on their desires, choices and instincts, and how they are related.

What is the difference between animals and people? The animals were given all instincts that requires for them to survive in the world when they were created by Hashem. The humans also have same quality, but we are distinguished by having divine soul when Hashem blew *ruach* (soul) into the nostrils of Adam. For animals, they seek food, water, and shelters. An animal without these instincts are most likely to die. For example, a dog needs food, water, and a shelter to survive. If a dog's bowl is empty, it will scratch or turn over the bowl signaling its owner to give him food. We bringing in our pets inside if the outside temperature is too cold or too hot. It also feels jealousy. When I pet one of my dogs, the other dog will push its head between me and the dog I am patting.

Like animals, we also have instincts to survive for without them we are most likely to die. Food, water, and shelters are the basic instincts or bodily desires we need to survive. Of all the desires, jealousy is the strongest and the most powerful we can have as it drives us every day to survive in this world. For example, if you see a rich man who is successful in his business, it is normal to feel jealousy as it drives you to work harder.

There are two types of jealousy that effects our behavior: positive and negative. The positive (good) jealous causes us to study harder, work harder, build better relationship with others, etc. The negative (bad) causes us to harm others. Whether it is positive or negative, its effect can cause harm or benefit us physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and as well as our surroundings. For example, let's say that I own a very successful sandwich shop. One day, another sandwich shop opened directly across from my business. Here are two basic choices (jealous) I can take: I vent my frustration and curses a new owner which is our natural desire (instinct) to survive. Or I can go to the new owner and offer my experiences for him to grow which is unnatural desire (against instinct). The first option can cause me to win initially, but eventually it will destroy me as well in the end because of negative jealousy. The second option would provide me and the new owner to grow successfully in the business as well as becoming friends in the future.

Here are some examples whether we are different from animals: monkeys like to jump up and down on trees. We see basketball players jumping up and down. We see people cheering for their teams and players by jumping up and down. We see that in boxing, a boxer desires (jealous) to have dominance (win) over his opponent. We also see people jumping up and down for their boxer. As we can see, the desires that we have is not that different from the animals. However, what separates us from the animals is to control that desires, the desires that goes against our natural instincts such as aiding a new sandwich shop owner.

The Scriptures are full of desires and choice. King David saw Batsheva bathing on the roof. He desired her. He made a decision (negative jealousy; following his natural desires) to kill her husband to fulfill his desires. His desires cost the lives of his subjects. Another example of King David was to conduct a census of his people. He went against the advice of his subjects and costed his kingdom.

As we can see the desires and choices we make are closely related as well as their effects. From the very beginning of B'resheet (Genesis), Chava (Eve) desired to eat from the Tree of Good and Evil. She made a

choice to eat from the Tree despite a commandment not to eat from it. She gave the fruit to her husband, Adam who made a choice to eat it. The choice they made brought the consequences of death. Even Aharon made a choice when he defended his position to Moshe.

When Hashem asked Adam why he ate the fruit, he said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I ate (Gen. 3:12) which is true. Chava said, "the *nahash* (snake) deceived me, and I ate." (v. 13) which is also true. Aharon said, "Do not let the displeasure of my master burn. You know the people that it is in evil." (Exo. 32:22) which is also true. BUT, it was their choice that caused judgment passed against them, not the truth. They all blamed another for the decisions (choices) they made.

In the Book of Mishle (Proverbs) 21:10 says, "The soul of the wicked desires evil." The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines 'evil' as "morally reprehensible", like Hitler or Haman. It also defines 'wicked' as "causing or likely to cause harm, distress, or trouble." The Scriptures defines 'evil' as intentionally going against the Will of Hashem. The 'wicked' are the people who do not follow the Will of Hashem.

In Hebrew, *ra* (רע) is 'evil' and *ra.sha* (רשע) is 'wicked'. The 'evil' is following our inclination (desires). The 'wicked' is willfully ignoring the Will of Hashem. For example: A wealthy man who is well recognized for his expertise in the Engineering, donates to charities, builds places of worship, designs safer buildings, etc. However, he ignores the commandments of Hashem by not keeping Shabbat. A business man also does help the neighbors by lowering prices on his merchandise, but he is unfaithful to his wife. These are the examples of the 'wicked.' Thus, Hashem said, "I am sick of your sacrifices. Don't bring me any more of them. I don't want your fat rams; I don't want to see the blood of your offerings." (Isa. 1:11) "I don't want your sacrifices – I want your love; I don't want your offerings – I want you to know me." (Hosea 6:6) The only way to get to know Hashem is by observing and actively pursuing His Commandments. That is how you show your love toward Hashem.

We all have filial duty toward our parents, we also have filial duty to Hashem. After all, He is our ultimate Father. That is the reason Hashem gave us His commandments. They are the Paths to show our love for Him. Even though, Adam told the truth to Hashem, he received ten curses. Chava told the truth, she received tens curses. Aharon told the truth, he could not enter the Promised Land. King Saul lost his kingdom by blaming on the nation rather than him. Even though they all told the truth, their intent was wrong. They refused to accept their responsibilities by blaming others for the choices they made.

To conclude, according to the Scriptures, we have a choice whether we walk the paths Hashem gave to us by following His commandments which is our natural inclination (desires). Or we can choose not to walk His paths. Many are struggling because they want to stay in the middle, meaning walk this way and that way depending on their whims or pleasures. We all have to make choices every day. Some are easy. Some are not. That being said, we cannot stay in the middle and be happy. Thus, our Savior Yehushua said, "Let your word 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No' be 'No' And what goes beyond these is from the wicked one." (Matt 5:37)

What distinguishes people from animals is that we can make choices (decisions) against our natural inclinations. A dog can jump into the water to rescue its master because of instincts (natural inclination). It is also our natural inclination to rescue the man from drowning. But, he can choose (choice) to go against his instincts and let the man drown. The business owner could easily say to himself that his livelihood is threatened by a new business owner across the street, and could have refused to help him in the business.

This makes him listening to his natural instincts (desires) to survive. However, he can overcome (against) his natural instincts (desires) to offer assistance to the new owner.

As we know, this year we have a ‘leap month’ according to the biblical moon calendar. We also know that parashat Ki Tisa is read around Purim. Because we have a ‘leap month’, the Purim for this year is on March 21<sup>st</sup> (Gregorian calendar). This day is known as Purim Gedol (the Great Purim) or Shushan Purim. Since there is ‘Gedol’, there has to be lesser. And that is called Purim Katan (this year, February 19<sup>th</sup>). This is a special day as it comes around every three years. The importance of Purim, other than reading the scroll of Chadassah (Esther), this was a time when all the Yisraelites contributed  $\frac{1}{2}$  *shekel* to the Mishkan (Tabernacle) to be counted from 20 years old and above whether they are rich or poor. What do they (priests) with the money? It was used to purchase sheep during the Shabbat as korban offering and during the Feasts.

Some say that the women were not counted during the census, that they are exempted from praying. This is not true. The Torah does not specify how many times we should pray in a day. The Torah hints of Abraham’s prayer in the morning. Yitzchak (Isaac) in the evening, and Ya’akov (Jacob) in the afternoon. But Daniel prayed three times a day. So, the minimum requirement according to the Torah is to pray at least once a day. The Rabbinical tradition derives from Daniel that we are to pray three times a day. That being said, the more praying we are to do, it is better for us as said, “Pray without ceasing.” (1Thes. 5:17) Yeshua gave us how we should pray in Mattiyahu (Matthew) 6:9-13)

Now, the method of prayer is also important. Which is more important? Reading Tehillim (Psalms) or praying? The question is not simple as it seems. Praising Hashem by reading the Tehillim or nagging Him with personal requests? For example, if you stand before a king with gifts, would a king more pliable to listen to you? If you stand with a list of demands without gift, would a king still listen to you? Logically, a king would listen to your demands if you ‘praise’ him first, then ask for things you need. So, is reading Tehillim more important than praying?

No so with Hashem. He is pleased to hear your concerns because He know you are asking Him for solutions or desires. Because He already known who we are! We only come to Him when we are in despair. We tend not to seek Hashem when our life moves along smoothly. But when a problem arises, we run to Hashem like a child. Thus He has no choice but to listen to you as a parent listens to his son. For this reason, Yeshua prayed often. How then should we pray? We praise Him first, tell Him what you need, and thank Him for listening to your prayers.

Why praise Hashem first? Does He really need to know how great He is? Does He really need praise from us? No. The praise is to acknowledge who He is and that we are grateful and appreciative for all the things He does for us. We make our requests (needs), than thank Him for listening. Even if Hashem does not meet all your requests, you are still doing a mitzvah emunah (obeisance of faith). Hashem knows what is good for you, therefore if your requests are not met you still thank Him for it.

How does the Purim connect with today’s parasha? In Shemot 30:23, the word ‘pure myrrh’ in Hebrew is ‘*mar-de’ror*’ (מַר-דְּרֹר). In Aramaic, it is ‘*mor.da.chia*’, thus Mordechai. The Talmud<sup>1</sup> explains that his full name was Mordechai Bilshan (Ezra 2:2; Nehemiah 7:7). Hoschander interpreted this as the Babylonian “Marduk Beshunu” meaning “Marduk is their lord.” Thus “Mordecai” is a nickname or a term of endearment.

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<sup>1</sup> BT, Menachot 64b and 65a

Now, the scroll of Chadassah contains 12,196 (in Hebrews). If you take 'mem' (מ) and circle it. And count 12,196 letters from 'mem', the next letter you get is 'resh' (ר); count 12,196 letters later, you get 'dalet' (ד); count 12,196 letters, you get 'kaf' (כ); count 12,196 letter, you get 'yud' (י). For Chadassah, her Babylonian name is Ester, so circle 'alef' (א); count 12,196 letters, you get 'samech' (ס); count 12,196 letters, you get 'tav' (ת); count 12,196 letters, you get 'resh' (ר).

The Gemara explains that the sin of the Golden Calf will be carried on until the coming of Messiah. If the sin was so great, how come only 3,000 people were killed? According to the Torah, the offender had to be caught in sinful act before being warned. The same offender had to continue same act before a judgment is passed on him.

Finally, if we want to break all the commandments in the Torah, Hashem forbid, it would take us seven years. For example, a shemitah (sabbatical year) comes every seven years. However, there are two laws that if broken, it will automatically count as if broken all the Laws. First, we are forbidden to worship any deity, a person, any objects other than Hashem. This does not mean should not have respect for another person nor love someone. This is permitted. What is not permitted is when we isolate a person and take that person as a god or that one particular is scripturally correct. Whoever she or he may be, we are to be like Bereans to examine his/her teachings to be correct. Because there is no discount when we follow someone's teaching blindly that he/she is speaking the words of Elohim. The other is breaking of Shabbat as a Shabbat is a sign between Hashem and us for eternity.