



Parashas Ki Sisa
'A Golden Opportunity'
(Rabbi Jonny Kersh)



*In memory of Shmuel Ben Yizcahar ha levi a”h
&
A full and speedy recovery for Shula bas Harriet*

Descending Mount Sinai with The Tablets, Moses becomes infuriated upon seeing so many of the Jewish People performing idolatry rites before a statue of a molten, calf of gold. His immediate response - to smash both tablets. Yet, it wasn't just the statue (per se) which angered Moses, rather, it was what it represented, as we shall see...

In truth, this National disaster can be traced back a short time before... The Torah describes the revelation at Mount Sinai as a wedding. Indeed, it was the consummation of a relationship in which Moses' role as 'matchmaker' between Hashem and the Jewish People had reached its epic finale. However, after hearing directly from God, the first 2 of the 10 commandments, the Nation became so terrified from the intensity of that experience, of being so up close and personal with the Almighty - they simply couldn't take it anymore. Suddenly, things ground to a halt. The people's response - to appoint Moses as intermediary. Now he would be charged with the task of receiving and relaying the remaining 8 commandments to the people.

In retrospect, the choice to appoint Moses as messenger was, albeit on a rarified level, the Jewish People's decision to divest and distance themselves from this exclusive opportunity to forge an even deeper relationship with their Creator. The psychological consequences of this decision meant that now, the Nation's collective 'mindset' had begun to conflate the notion that an intermediary was vital for their continued relationship with G-d.

In fact, the Torah alludes to this very misconception in its description of the Golden Calf. The words “Egel Masecha”, simply understood, means a 'molten calf'. However, Rabbi David Fohrman points out, “masescha” or 'molten' carries another meaning: that of a mask or cover. Through the Golden Calf, and in turn, with the appointment of Moses as intermediary, meant that rather than facing Him directly, the Nation had submitted Itself into adopting an identity or cover through which their relationship with God would continue. In doing so, they had shrunk a vast expanse for spiritual growth into narrow straits of limitation.

Understanding the depths of such an action, and upon seeing the pride with which the people acted toward the statue, Moses immediately realized the gravity of the situation. Smashing the Tablets, an act with which God concurred, was essentially a mirror in which the People could see their own self delusion. The delusion that a marriage could be reduced to merely the ring! As a symbol of His love for us, God gave us the Tablets of the Ten Commandments, and when Moses' smashed them, he was effectively showing us that regardless of whether whole or broken; however, in the absence of the desire for a genuine relationship, even the most sacred of artifacts becomes meaningless...for their worth is only as much as the relationship which they represent.

When, as it does, complacency entices us, stating its case that "texting is just as good"; but you know that, in truth, a phone call would be more meaningful! When it promotes, under the hashtag: '#Choice of Millenials', that proper facetime is now redundant, because social media has now become the 'real',

modern platform where our close relationships are cultivated - yet, you know a thousand 'pokes' (old FaceBook jargon, for those who still remember) will never replace a hug! And, when it advocates that rather than engage in the challenge of meaningful debate, we take cover in the 'safe space' of political correctness - lest we 'trigger' the other person or become accused of perpetrating a "micro-aggression", we would do well to remind ourselves that these challenging moments in life are indeed, moments as our ancestors experienced them. Like them, we too find ourselves standing at a spiritual crossroads, summoned to accept the challenge of breaking free from the warm safety of our comfort zones where token words and symbols afford us protection from exposure to our true selves and instead, to boldly venture towards forging genuine and meaningful relationships.

This week is a time when we are able to seriously ponder that crossroads. Traveling the roads of spiritual growth requires effort and courage, and the need to take uncomfortable risks that will surely expose our vulnerability. The alternative: a deceptively safe and well lit path that meanders towards complacency and ultimately, self deception. Which one will you choose?

Shabbat Shalom!

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