



GROWTH

At The

SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT KI TISA

Unconditional

In this week's Parsha, we come across something spectacular.

When exactly did Moshe receive the first set of *luchot* from G-d?

The Torah recounts (Exodus 31:18): "And He [G-d] gave Moshe, when He concluded speaking with him at Mount Sinai, the two Tablets of Testimony." The verse makes it clear that only after Hashem had finished teaching Moshe all the laws and commandments, i.e. 40 days after Moshe had ascended the mountain, He granted him the *luchot* in order to present it to the Jewish nation. However, it's no secret that the Jews had committed the treacherous sin of the golden calf 39 days after Moshe had ascended the mountain (see *ibid.* 32:5-6 and *Rashi*). This historical sequence of events is mind-blowing. Even after *Am Yisrael* had made a deity, G-d nevertheless *continued* teaching Torah to Moshe (for him to then pass on to the people) and furthermore bestowed him with the Tablets – despite all that had already taken place!

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory, would look at this story and extract a transformative takeaway. In our lives, too, we aren't to look at the spiritual downfall of others and run away from trying to help. We can't merely give up on our fellow Jew who is lacking in spiritual development or observance of Jewish practices and figure that attempting to inspire and influence him with Torah and mitzvot is hopeless and futile. Hashem teaches us firsthand that He is ready, willing, and able to give us His most precious gift – a roadmap to a meaningful life – just moments after our nation displayed disloyalty and betrayal. Let us take example and try making a positive impact on the people around us, no matter how lost or distant they may be. This not only elevates those around us but enhances our own Judaism and spirituality as well.

*"They tried to erase us. We answered by dancing
louder, celebrating harder, and believing deeper.*

That's the Jewish way." (Meaningful Minute)

No Doubt

The megillah recounts that after Esther was taken by Achashverosh, Mordechai would pass by the royal grounds everyday "to know how Esther was doing and what would happen to her" (Esther 2:11). Rashi makes an interesting comment. He says that we find two instances wherein *tzaddikim* were given hints that there would be salvation: King David and Mordechai. David had an indication that he would defeat Goliath, as the verse (Samuel I 17:36) describes, "Both the lion and the bear your servant struck." David reasoned that, perhaps, the whole reason he was set up to defeat the lion and bear was in order to give him the courage to fight Goliath as well. Mordechai, too, thought that the only reason why Esther was taken to the home of Achashverosh was in order to bring an incredible salvation for the Jews, and so he repeatedly went around to find out what would be her fate.

Rashi's comparison is truly astonishing. How could he compare two incidents which seem to bear no resemblance to one another? In fact, they appear to be quite the opposite! David had a past success to look at and therefore conclude that Hashem was setting the stage for his victory. He was able to link the current situation with one of the past and deduce, "Why did Hashem send me the lion? It was probably to show me that I can overcome Goliath as well." Mordechai, on the other hand, did not share the same experience – he didn't dig up an old memory and use that to strengthen his resolve. He merely assumed based on the current events alone, seeing Esther's incredible suffering, that a great salvation would certainly come. How can we even say that "he had been given a hint of impending deliverance"? What was the hint?

I once saw a beautiful interpretation [1]. Indeed, Mordechai was given a small taste and hint of the approaching salvation: the darkness itself. When he saw Esther being taken to the wicked king's palace, *that* terrible predicament had him believe with absolute certainty that an unbelievable redemption would come from it. Yes, the "hint" may have differed from that of David HaMelech, but with Mordechai's firm *emuna*, it gave him just as much confidence, compelling him to pass by every day just to see *how* the miracle would unfold. Mordechai knew the secret behind all of creation: falling down is only for the purpose of subsequently elevating oneself. He thus understood that such devastation is, in reality, a hint from Heaven that something extremely good was about to come. And until then, his job was to maintain proper faith, waiting patiently just to see how it would all transpire.

Let us, too, strengthen our emuna and realize that any setback we face in life is really Hashem's way of preparing us for something truly amazing to come. Hang in there, stay strong, and don't give up!

[1] From "Open Gates to Purim and the Megillah"