



**ALEPH
INSTITUTE**
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

TORAH WEEKLY

ת"ש

25 February -
3 March, 2018
10 - 16 Adar, 5778

Torah:
Exodus 30:11 - 34:35

Haftarah:
Kings I 18:20 - 39

■ CALENDARS

We have Jewish Calendars, if you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi / Chaplain to contact us.

■ FAMILY PROGRAMS

Do you have family on the outside who are struggling, please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

■ GRAPE JUICE & MATZAH

Aleph offers free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll, it is available to all prisons.

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BROKEN AND REINFORCED

Little David was a straight A's student. He was always top of his class, well behaved and always completed his assignments on time. Year after year, David graduated each and every grade with honors. Then came the seventh grade. Suddenly everything changed. David's grade dropped significantly, and his work was always handed in late. His attitude took a downward turn and his behaviour began to deteriorate. This went on for the entire first month of school. The principal and teachers called a meeting with David's parents to discuss this inexplicable turn of events. His mother promised to speak to him and to do whatever necessary to get to the bottom of it.

"David," his mom said to him later that night, "please tell me what's going on. What is causing this change in character?" David admitted that he just no longer had an interest in his studies. His mother countered, "Well then, what I do to reignite that interest?"

"Get me a smartphone."

"Say what?"

"Yes, get me a smartphone, and I'll get back on track."

"How about this," replied mom, "You get back on track for two weeks, and we'll be happy to get you a smartphone."

"Deal," said David.

"Deal!" said a very happy mom.

Just as his mother was about to leave the room, David stopped her in her tracks. "Mom, I don't mean to be disrespectful, but isn't it fascinating?"

His mother turned back to him, "What's that, sweetheart?"

"Well," David said, rubbing his hands nervously, "I've been all A's and well behaved for my entire school career, and I've never gotten anything for it. Here now, I let my game down for one month - I've got myself a smartphone..."

Very often we as parents, teachers, friends, and family tend to overlook the things that are good simply because we have become accustomed to them being that way. It is not until something disrupts that status quo that a real appreciation is formed.

A few weeks ago we read about the giving of the Ten Commandments, and the first set of Luchot, tablets. This week, in the Torah Portion of Ki Tisa, we read about the second set of tablets given to Moses, which he then passed on to the Jewish people.

But there was a major difference between these two episodes. The first time around the Jewish people were on the lever of Tzadikim, we were perfect and righteous and holy. We were a newborn nation which had faithfully followed Moses out of Egypt into the wilderness, and arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai to receive the Torah.

Parshat Ki Tisa

In this week's reading, on the other hand, we were no longer Tzadikim, we were sinners. We had sinned with the golden calf. We were disloyal in our relationship with God. But yet God accepted our regrets and our remorse. We were now Ba'alei Teshuva, returnees, who were repenting and returning to the way of God. And God gave us a second chance, the second set of tablets.

Most of us are not Tzadikim. We're not perfect, we're not entirely righteous and pure. We have our ups and our down, we have good days and not-so-good days. And so often we tell ourselves, "I'm a failure, I'm a misfit, God doesn't want a disappointment like me." But this week God says exactly the opposite, "You're My children, I'm your father, I want you back. I want to give you a second chance."

In fact, our sages tell us that God did not want a world of perfect beings. He preferred imperfect human beings who continuously strive to perfect themselves, one step at a time. And we, who are created in the image of God, share His characteristics. That tendency towards to struggling child who pushes himself to do the right thing, that too is a Godly habit. God loves it when we are truly faced with a challenge and choose to overcome it. So never write yourself off, never count yourself out or distance yourself from God's family, but rather look to improve one

step at a time and one day at a time. It's the way He likes it.

A COVENANT IS FOREVER

The Jewish nation experiences the most powerful Godly revelation ever to occur on this world as they receive the ten commandments from God, through Moses. Forty days later, Moses is descending Mt. Sinai, holding the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, the original contract between God and the Jewish people. And then he sees it. His people are worshipping the golden calf. In one of the most dramatic events in our long history, he throws the tablets to the ground, shattering the priceless agreement between God and His people.

Torah commentaries offer various explanations as to why Moses chose to break the tablets. One reason given is that he intended to save the nation from certain punishment by destroying the contract which they had violated. This action effectively freed the people from any commitment for the time being. In fact, the Talmud (Tractate Shabbat) tells us that God Himself expressed His appreciation and admiration for Moses' bold actions.

But in breaking the tablets at this critical moment, Moses was also engraving upon his people an essential message that would remain with us for all time. Moses was telling them that because their contractual agreement with God has been violated and, as a result, destroyed, God was now effectively free from any commitment to them as well.

And yet, although the contract had been shattered, God did not desert them. Even without a contract, they would remain his chosen people. Moses wanted the Jewish people to see that God's connection to them goes beyond agreements, beyond circumstances and ill choices, and even beyond human logic entirely. It is an essential, unshakable bond of love and commitment for all times and places.

This has reoccurred numerous times throughout our history. God describes us as a stiff-necked people. We turned our backs on God repeatedly, only to turn back to him in prayer when times got tough. And He was always there. Whenever we chose to turn back, He was there. And perhaps Moses was also asking the Jews people to reciprocate my re-dedicating themselves to God as His chosen people. Even when it would become difficult, even in circumstances when it would not be rational or seem beneficial. Even if the nations of the world would hate us for it. Even if it meant reaching deep within our souls to access a tiny flickering ember of faith. The Jewish people understood this lesson. It became etched into the very fabric of our faith and to this day, that message helps us to turn to God and reaffirm our connection with Him time and time again. Even, and especially during our most trying times.

God's Covenant is forever. Like it or not, He will never forsake His people.

The word Ki-Sisa
Means when you when you lift
higher
But this does not match
With the events that transpire

The Yidden decided to make
A calf of pure gold
And to worship it in bad ways
Yet from the name we are told

That this was a good thing
That it made the Jews rise
But we see that the title
Of this parsha applies

To the event which occur after
That every single bad
Has some sort of benefit
Some good to be had

Even bad thing
Can help us shoot to great
heights
And heard about this
Reading the Megillah Purim
night

All of the suffering
That was bad-the Jews did say
Gave us Purim
Another holiday

In Jewish History

Shabbat, 16 Adar, 5778 - March 3, 2018 **Moses' Brit (1393 BCE)**

Moses was born on the 7th of Adar of the year 2368 from creation (1393 BCE); accordingly, Adar 14 was the 8th day of his life and the day on which he was circumcised in accordance with the Divine command to Abraham.

Purim Victory Celebrated (356 BCE)

The festival of Purim celebrates the salvation of the Jewish people from Haman's plot "to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, young and old, infants and women, in a single day."

The events of Purim extended over a period of several years, culminating in the victory celebrations of Adar 14-15 of 356 BCE.

Friday, 15 Adar, 5778 - March 2, 2018

Purim Victory Celebrated in Shushan (356 BCE)

The battles fought between the Jews and their enemies, which took place on Adar 13 throughout the Persian empire (see "Today in Jewish History" for that date), continued for two days -- Adar 13 and 14 -- in the capital city of Shushan, where there were a greater number of Jew haters. Thus the victory celebrations in Shushan were held on the 15th of Adar, and the observance of the festival of Purim was instituted for that day in Shushan and all walled cities.

Shabbat, 16 Adar, 5778 - March 3, 2018

Rebuilding of Jerusalem Wall Begun (c. 41 CE)

Agrippa I, appointed by the Roman Emperor to rule over Judea, was pious and kind to his subjects. During his reign, the Jews began to prosper and live comfortably. The Sages of the time accorded him great respect.

Agrippa I started construction to repair, broaden and heighten the walls around Jerusalem. The Romans, wary of the Jews' rising prosperity, placed many obstacles in his way. Nonetheless, the wall was completed, though the finished product was not as magnificent as originally planned.

The 16th of Adar, the day when the construction commenced, was instituted to be a joyous day.