



17 - 23 February, 2019
12 - 18 Adar I, 5779

Torah :
Exodus 30:11 - 34:35

Haftorah:
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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JEW'S AND OIL

It's too late. I'm too far gone. It'll never be the same. How many times have we heard those words? Or, worse still, said them?

This week's Parshah tells the story of the Golden Calf, the worst national sin in the history of the Jewish people. Frankly, if I were the editor of the Bible I'd have left that part out. How humiliating to the Jews! Just weeks after the greatest revelation of all time, when they saw and heard G-d up front and personal, they go and bow down to a cow?! How fickle can you get? But the Torah is unflinchingly honest and records this most unflattering moment of ours in all its gory detail. Why?

Perhaps the very important lessons we need to draw from this embarrassing episode are, firstly, that people do sin, human beings do make mistakes, and even inspired Jews who saw the divine with their own eyes can mess up — badly. And, secondly, that even afterwards there is still hope, no matter what.

In the very same Parshah we read how G-d tells Moses to carve a second set of tablets, to replace the first set he smashed when he came down the mountain and was shocked by what the Jews were up to. (Sort of "You broke them, you fix them" — like the guy who fell asleep during the rabbi's sermon and the rabbi tells the shamash to go and wake the fellow up. The shamash says, "Rabbi, you put him to

sleep, you wake him up!") The Torah does not intend to diminish our respect for that generation, but rather to help us understand human frailty, our moral weakness and the reality of relationships, spiritual or otherwise.

G-d gave us a perfect Torah. The tablets were hand-made by G-d, pure and sacred, and then we messed up. So is it all over? Is there really no hope now? Are we beyond redemption? After all, what could possibly be worse than idolatry? We broke the first two commandments and the tablets were shattered into smithereens because we were no longer worthy to have them. It was the ultimate infidelity.

So Torah teaches that all is not lost. As bad as it was — and it was bad — it is possible for man to repair the damage. Moses will make new tablets. They won't be quite the same as G-d's, but there will be Tablets nonetheless. We can pick up the pieces.

I once heard a colleague speak about the significance of breaking the glass under the chupah (wedding canopy). Besides never forgetting Jerusalem and praying for her full restoration, this ceremony teaches a very important lesson about life to a bride and groom who are about to embark on their own new path in life. What happens immediately after the groom breaks the glass? Everyone shouts "Mazel Tov!" The message is clear. Something broke? Nu, it's not the end of the world. We can even laugh about it and still be happy. Nisht geferlich. Lo

Parshat Ki Tisa

nora. This too shall pass. A very practical, peace-keeping tip for the new couple.

There are most definitely second chances in life. At my Shul we run an adult education program called CAJE, the College of Adult Jewish Education, and the by-line we use in the CAJE logo is Your Second Chance to Know. There are second chances and third chances too. Many Hebrew school dropouts have passed through our classes and, as adults, learned to read Hebrew from scratch. Today, some of our graduates can even lead the Shul service and I am very proud of them and our program.

It is possible to pick up the pieces in life. Whether it's our relationships with G-d, our marriage partners, our kids or our colleagues, we can make amends and repair the damage.

If the Jews could recover from the Golden Calf, our own challenges are small indeed.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

WHO'S A CHEAPSKATE

Some people are cheap, penny-pinching their way through life. They eat stale, expired food, and on the rare occasion that they eat out, they don't leave tips. They huddle under layers throughout the winter, glaring in defiance at the central heating unit, and perspire their way through the summer, too miserly to install air conditioning. They don't spend on themselves, and they definitely don't give to charity.

Other people give generously when asked and are equally lavish when spending on themselves. They dispense cash with largesse and are always ready to indulge in an extra luxury or two. Money is there for spending, and life is meant to be lived large.

But it's a rare individual who sacrifices his own creature comforts to better provide for the needs of others, who holds back on his own spending so that there will be more left over to give away. Imagine the strength of character needed to put everyone else first and yourself last. That's generosity!

The Torah describes the construction of the Kiyor, the copper laver which was used by the kohanim (priests) to wash their hands and feet when entering the Temple. The raw materials for the Kiyor were donated by the Jewish women, who gave up their own valuable mirrors for the cause.

Almost immediately thereafter, we read about the most shocking sin in history, when, just weeks after receiving the Torah on Sinai, the people constructed and worshiped a golden calf. "And they stripped themselves of the golden earrings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. He took [them] from their hand[s], fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into a molten calf, upon which they said: 'These are your gods, O Israel.'"1

However, it should be noted that the women did not sin. They remained faithful to G-d and Moses. They refused to contribute their jewelry and, even when threatened, remained true to their faith. When Moses finally returned, the sinners were punished, while the women were rewarded for their faithfulness in the face of temptation and violence.

But how can we really be assured that the women's motives were so pure? Maybe they refused to give up their gold because they just wanted to keep it for themselves.

Perhaps that's why the Torah prefaces the story of the golden calf with the description of the Kiyor. The women weren't cheap, they were wise. They were willing to give up their own cherished possessions for a truly G-dly purpose, but unwilling to invest in evil. And that's why they were rewarded.

This is the attitude we should strive to inculcate in our children. There is nothing wrong with spending money for the useful things in life, and a person should aspire to serve G-d lavishly. Paying for a quality Jewish education, buying kosher food, and supporting synagogues and worthy institutions might be expensive, but they're worth it.

It is only when it comes to the empty-headed frivolities of life that we should hesitate. Are we wasting our money? Do we need it? Would we be any worse off if we waited till we indulged? It's not that we are too cheap to spend; rather, we recognize the true value of money and life, and we're saving towards the investments that last forever.

By Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum

PURIM KATAN (MINOR PURIM)

Tuesday 14 Adar I 5779 (2/19/2019) is Purim Katan.

In regular years, the 14th of Adar is Purim, the festival that celebrates the salvation of the Jewish people from Haman's evil decree in the year 3405 from creation (356 BCE). In a leap year - which has two Adars - Purim is

celebrated in Adar II, and the 14th of Adar I is designated as Purim Kattan, the "Little Purim." There are no special observances, however, associated with Purim Kattan, other than the omission of Tachnun ("supplications") from the daily prayers and a prohibition against fasting or holding eulogies on this day. The Code of Jewish Law cites an opinion that one should increase in festivity and joy, but rules that there is no obligation to do so; "Nevertheless, a person should increase somewhat in festivity... for 'One who is of good heart is festive always' " (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 697:1*).

FAST OF ESTHER

The fast of Esther takes place on Wednesday March 20, 2019, please complete the necessary paperwork to the Rabbi/Chaplain, so you receive the bag lunch.

PURIM

Purim this year will take place on March 21, please make necessary arrangements with your Rabbi/Chaplain to secure space where you can hear the Megillah (scroll of Esther) being read. We are making arrangements to try and have a Rabbi read the Megillah at your institution.

PASSOVER

Please begin working with your Rabbi / Chaplain to ensure the paperwork is being processed and the necessary arrangements are being made for Passover.

In Jewish History

Tuesday, 14 Adar I, 5779 - February 11, 2019

Moses' Brit (1393 BCE)

According to tradition, Moses was born on the 7th of Adar I, today was the 8th day of his life and the day on which he was circumcised in accordance with the Divine command to Abraham.

Friday, 17 Adar I, 5779 - February 22, 2019

Code of Jewish Law Completed (1565)

Rabbi Yosef Caro published the Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law. This concise codification of all Jewish law which is germane today was an extension of his Beit Yosef commentary (see entry for the 11th of Elul).

The Shulchan Aruch is divided into four sections: Orach Chaim details the laws pertaining to daily life, lifecycle events, and holidays. Yoreh De'ah. laws which a practicing rabbi must be proficient in, such as complex nuances of the kosher laws, laws of mikvah, and laws of slaughtering. Even Ha'ezzer, laws of marriage, divorce, reproduction, and the like. Choshen Mishpat, monetary and judicial laws; required study for a member of a rabbinical court.

To this very day, the Shulchan Aruch serves as the primary halachic guide for Jewish life.