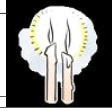


# KUSHNER COMMENTS



Shabbat Candle Lighting: 5:35 PM  
Havdalah: 6:35 PM

(Times are for Livingston, NJ)

## Parsha Summary: *Parshat Ki Tisa*

The parsha opens with Hashem's commandment to perform a census of the nation, in which everyone would contribute a half *shekel* coin that would be counted in lieu of the person. The Torah then continues with its instructions concerning the building of the *Mishkan*, appointing Betzalel and Oholiav as those responsible for overseeing its construction. Hashem also explains that the construction of the *Mishkan* must stop for Shabbat.

This parsha also tells the story of Bnei Yisrael's sin with the golden calf. Bnei Yisrael panics when they find that Moshe is late in returning from Har Sinai. They then erect a golden calf as a replacement for Moshe. Hashem at first wishes to destroy the entire nation as punishment, but Moshe convinces Hashem not to do so. Still, Moshe destroys the *luchot*, or tablets that Bnei Yisrael received at Har Sinai, upon descending and witnessing Bnei Yisrael's actions. Hashem punishes those who sinned but He ultimately forgives the nation, ordering Moshe to carve a new set of *luchot*. In this story Moshe attains a special closeness with Hashem and Hashem reveals to Moshe His thirteen attributes of mercy. Hashem then renews his covenant with Bnei Yisrael at the close of the parsha, as the nation asserts its commitment to Hashem once again.

## *The Value of Doing Absolutely Nothing*

Rabbi Shimshon Jacob

Often we are faced with struggles in which we have two equal options that stand before us and we are forced to decide which is the right one. As always, the Torah instructs us as to how to find a proper solution.

In one situation in the Talmud, there is a strange predicament. In this case, there is a question as to what the Hebrew date is. Due to a number of factors the date is not clear, but it may or may not be the fifteenth day of the month of *Tishrei*, which would be the first day of *Sukkot*. To complicate matters, it is also *Shabbat*, so if people use their *lulavim* then someone might carry them in a public domain, which would desecrate *Shabbat*. We are now faced with complex challenge: On the one hand, one is possibly obligated to shake the *lulav* on that day; on the other hand, one might possibly desecrate the *Shabbat* should one carry the *lulav* somewhere in order to shake it. Which uncertainty should take priority? Caught in this dilemma, the rabbis of the Talmud looked back to the Torah to gain guidance from a similar struggle.

Aharon's brother, the leader of the people, had not been seen since he disappeared up the side of the mountain. The people had grown restless and were demanding a "new god" to serve. The last person to refuse them, Chur, had been put to death. Aharon was faced with a choice: According to "Plan A," he would refuse their demand in order to show his disapproval, thus prompting them to stain their hands with his blood as well, after which they would just appoint a new high priest and serve idols anyway. According to "Plan B," he would go along with them, seemingly showing consent, standing by as he allowed them to worship an idolatrous god.

In a brilliant announcement Aharon declared, "A festival for Hashem tomorrow!" (32:5, ) thus

(continued on the back of the page)

פרשת כי תצא



In this parsha, Hashem wishes to punish the Jewish people for their sin of the golden calf, and he tells Moshe His intention to kill the Jewish people and to make out of Moshe a stronger and better nation than the Jews could ever be. Moshe not only refuses Hashem 's request but reminds Him that He took the Jewish people out from Egypt and that if He should destroy the Jewish people, the Egyptians will say that Hashem was not strong enough to continue to protect His people. After this, Moshe invokes the merit of the patriarchs: " Remember Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, your servants, to whom you swore and told them that their offspring shall be as numerous as the stars of the sky, and the land of which I told you I will give to your offspring and they shall inherit it forever " ( 32:13 ).

With these words, Moshe convinces Hashem to spare *Am Yisrael*. Moshe brings attention to Hashem' s promise to give *Eretz Yisrael* to the Jewish people He was thus showing that if Hashem were to kill the Jewish people, He would effectively be breaking His oath, since Hashem promised to give the land of Israel to all of the Jewish People. The *Netziv* clarifies this, explaining that if Hashem had only brought Moshe to *Eretz Yisrael* then it would not be good enough, since He vowed to bring all of *Am Yisrael* to the promised land.

However, if Moshe 's invocation of the merit of the patriarchs is so effective here, how come he does not invoke their merit after the sin of the spies, for which that generation of *Bnei Yisrael* would receive the punishment that they would not enter *Eretz Yisrael*? The *Rambam* and *Rav Moshe Tzuviel* explain that this was because of the essence of the sin itself. During the sin of the spies, the spies returned from having toured *Eretz Yisrael*. They gave a negative report, in which they told the nation that it would be impossible for them to conquer the land. The Jewish people immediately cried out that they wanted to return to Egypt. In reacting this way, the Jewish people were rebelling against Hashem. The Jews were virtually rejecting *Eretz Yisrael*. They were uninterested in *Eretz Yisrael* if it presented seeming challenges, as everything was " spoon-fed " to them in the desert and they felt they had everything they wanted: food, protection, and Hashem 's presence. Why should they want to leave? Because of this, Moshe could not invoke the merit of the patriarchs following this sin because the Jewish people broke their part of the deal: to desire and cherish *Eretz Yisrael*. It was because of this that the generation of the spies was not permitted to enter the promised land.

Today, we should learn from this that *Am Yisrael* needs to want to settle in Israel, otherwise we too will not be permitted to enter our promised land. Just like the Sinai desert, America is a comfortable place in which most of what we need and want is for the taking, but we must learn from the mistakes of our past. In the name and merit of the patriarchs we must desire, cherish and settle *Eretz Yisrael*, our only home.

*Nimrod Soll is a senior at RKYHS.*

allowing himself an entire night before the choice needed to be made. This event might in fact be the birth place of the Talmudic concept " *Shev v 'al ta 'aseh*," or " sit and don' t take action." This is a great lesson of patience, instructing us to take a step back from any given conflict and to give ourselves the space to gain perspective on a struggle. This can provide amazing insights and solutions not seen before. The rabbis in the Talmud follow in Aharon 's footsteps in their consideration of whether to fulfill the mitzvah of *lulav* when Shabbat is on a day which may or may not be *Sukkot*: When presented with this struggle they rule that one sit tight and not act.

Life will throw us a number of challenges and we will only be able to overcome them if we approach them properly. The Torah here shows us that it is always important to first gain perspective and to then reconsider the issue with renewed awareness and understanding.

*Rabbi Jacob teaches Talmud at RKYHS.*