



Living with the Rebbe



This week's Torah portion, Ki Tisa, contains one of the most misunderstood occurrences in the Torah - the sin of the Golden Calf. This sin was so great that its consequences are still being felt today, 3300 years later. For, as a result of the sin, G-d promised that every punishment that would ever befall the Jewish people would contain an element of chastisement for this grievous transgression.

And yet, as it appears in the Written Torah (without the accompanying commentary), the entire account is difficult to understand. How could the same people who had just left Egypt under miraculous circumstances, received the Torah at Mount Sinai amidst open miracles and actually heard the voice of G-d utter the first two of the Ten Commandments, actually worship a molten image?

Closer study reveals, however, that the Jewish people were not seeking a substitute for G-d in the Golden Calf; what they desired was a substitute for Moses, as expressed in the verse, "And the people saw that Moses was delayed in coming down ...and they said [to Aaron]: Get up, make us a god...for this man, Moses, who has taken us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Without Moses, the Jewish people felt lost. Moses was the intermediary that connected them to G-d, as it states, "I stand between you and G-d." Moses was the medium through which the Children of Israel were freed from Egypt and through whom they received the Torah, to the point where "the Divine Presence spoke from his throat."

Moses is referred to as "a man of G-d," for despite the fact that he was mortal, Moses existed on a spiritual plane on which he was totally united with the Divine. His function as intermediary between man and G-d served to strengthen the Jews' belief in the Creator, for it is difficult to believe in a G-d one cannot see. When the Jews beheld a human being on such a G-dly level, it strengthened their faith in G-d and connected them to Him in a tangible manner.

In this light, the mistake they made is far easier to comprehend. When Moses did not reappear when they expected him, the Jewish people feared they had lost the means by which they bound themselves with the Infinite.

They rightly understood that such an intermediary needs to be completely united with G-d; having just witnessed the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, at which G-d descended in a "supernal chariot" bearing the face of an ox, they decided to forge a calf of gold that would closely resemble it.

The Jewish people were correct in their recognition of the need for an intermediary between man and G-d in the form of a G-dly human being; there was also nothing wrong with their choice of an inanimate object to draw holiness down into this world (G-d's voice would later issue forth from between the cherubim - fashioned in the form of two angels - above the holy ark in the Sanctuary).

Rather, their error was in taking into their own hands a matter that can only be determined by G-d. Only G-d can decide how His holiness will be transmitted; only He may choose the correct medium.

Adapted from the works of the Rebbe

OF LIONS AND LAMBS

This Friday marks the beginning of the month of March... "Hey, wait a minute," you might be thinking. "In a Jewish publication, shouldn't the discussions be about Jewish months rather than 'secular' months?"

A famous teaching of the Baal Shem Tov is that from everything a person sees or hears - whether in the realm of holiness or the seemingly secular - he can learn a lesson in his G-dly service.

So, what can we learn from March?

Many of us know the saying, "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb." Free associate and the image of the lion and the lamb brings to mind a time of world-peace. So powerful is this image of lion and lamb connoting world-peace that a grass-roots group of parents who promote non-violent toys for children call themselves the Lion and the Lamb.

When our prophets speak of the ultimate world peace in the Messianic Era, they do not pair the lion with the lamb but rather state, "The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid..." The prophet continues, "...And the lion will eat straw as the ox." One might ask, "Is this allegorical, or will animals that were previously adversaries actually co-exist peacefully?" That's a good question! According to the opinions of many of our great Sages, these prophecies should be taken literally.

Nachmonides documents this stand profusely, although he maintains that their fulfilment will not necessitate great changes in Creation because, "Initially when the world was created, prior to the sin of Adam, animals were not predatory. Only after Adam's sin did their natures change..."

Similarly, Radak declares that animals were not originally predators, as G-d created only one male and one female of each species. If either one would have been killed, the species would have become extinct.

However, there are other great thinkers whose opinions differ. No less a giant than Maimonides declares: "Do not presume that in the days of Moshiach the nature of the world will change, or there will be innovations in the work of Creation. Rather, the world will continue according to its pattern."

How are we to understand Maimonides' words, knowing that he established as one of the 13 principles of Judaism the belief in the resurrection of the dead, an act that is certainly a change in the nature of the world? The Rebbe explains that there are two stages to the Messianic Era. In the first stage, "the coming of Moshiach," everything will go according to its natural pattern. In the second stage, the actual Redemption, we will experience supernatural and miraculous occurrences. However, it is possible, according to the Rebbe, that we could by-pass the first stage and go straight to the miracles - if we are meritorious. Differing opinions aside, whichever way it's going to happen, let it just happen already! And may we celebrate the month of March (and the rest of the month of Adar) in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem!

Aliyot Summery

First Aliyah: G-d commands Moses to take a census of the Jewish adult male population by collecting an atonement offering of half a silver shekel from each individual. The collected silver was melted down, and was made into sockets for the beams of the Tabernacle. G-d instructs Moses to make a copper washstand for the Tabernacle. The priests would use this laver to wash their hands and feet before their service. G-d tells Moses the recipe for making holy "anointing oil." This oil, which was prepared with various aromatic herbs and fine spices, was used to anoint and sanctify the Tabernacle, its vessels, and Aaron and his sons. The remainder of the oil was put aside, and was used to anoint kings and high priests of future generations. G-d also gives Moses the formula for the incense which was offered twice-daily in the Tabernacle. The duplication of the anointing oil or incense for personal use is prohibited. G-d imbues Bezalel with wisdom, and appoints him to be the chief craftsman of the Tabernacle and its contents. G-d appoints Oholiab as his assistant. This lengthy aliyah concludes with G-d telling the Jewish people to observe the Shabbat, the eternal sign between Him and the Children of Israel.

Second Aliyah: After G-d revealed Himself to the entire nation at Mount Sinai and told them the Ten Commandments, Moses ascended the mountain where he remained for forty days. There he was to study the Torah and receive the Tablets. The Jews miscalculate when Moses is supposed to return, and when he doesn't appear on the day when they anticipate him, they grow impatient and demand of Aaron to make for them a new god. Aaron cooperates, all along intending to postpone and buy time until Moses' return, but despite his efforts, a Golden Calf emerges from the flames. The festivities and sacrifices start early next morning. Moses pleads with an incensed G-d to forgive the Jews' sin. G-d acquiesces and relents from His plan to annihilate the Jews. Moses comes down with the Tablets, sees the idolatrous revelry, and breaks the Tablets. Moses enlists the Tribe of Levi to punish the primary offenders. 3000 idol worshippers are executed on that day. Moses ascends Mount Sinai again, in an attempt to gain complete atonement for the sin. G-d tells Moses to lead the Jews towards the Promised Land, but insists that He won't be leading them personally; instead an angel will be dispatched to lead them.

Seeing G-d's displeasure with the Jews, Moses takes his own tent and pitches it outside the Israelite encampment. This tent becomes the center of study and spirituality until the Tabernacle is inaugurated.

Third Aliyah: Moses asks G-d to reconsider the matter of the angel leading them. G-d reconsiders, and agrees to lead them Himself again. Moses then requests that G-d's presence never manifest itself on any other nation other than the Jews.

Fourth Aliyah: G-d agrees to Moses request that His presence only dwell amongst the Jews. Moses requests to be shown G-d's glory. G-d agrees, but informs Moses that he will only be shown G-d's "back," not G-d's "face."

Fifth Aliyah: G-d tells Moses to carve new tablets upon which G-d will engrave the Ten Commandments. Moses takes the new tablets up to Mt. Sinai, where G-d reveals His glory to Moses while proclaiming His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.

Sixth Aliyah: G-d seals a covenant with Moshe, assuring him again that His presence will only dwell with the Jews. G-d informs the Jewish people that He will drive the Canaanites from before them. He instructs them to destroy all vestiges of idolatry from the land, and to refrain from making any covenants with its current inhabitants. The Jews are then commanded not to make molten gods, to observe the three festivals, not to eat *chametz* on Passover, to sanctify male firstborn humans and cattle, and not to cook meat together with milk.

Seventh Aliyah: Moses descends Mount Sinai with the second tablets, and unbeknownst to him beams of light were projecting off his face. Aaron and the people are originally afraid of him. Moses teaches the people the Torah he studied on the mountain. Moses wears a veil on his face from that time on, but removes it when speaking to G-d and when repeating G-d's words to the people.

Thoughts that Count

See, I have called by name Betzalel the son of Uri (Ex. 31:2)

When Moses ascended on high to receive the Torah, G-d showed him all the Sanctuary's vessels and explained how to make them. Moses thus assumed that he would be the one to make them, until G-d took out the Book of Adam and showed him the names of all the people who would live from Creation until the Resurrection of the Dead, "each generation and its kings, its generation and its leaders and prophets." Pointing to Betzalel's name He declared, "See, I have called by name Betzalel," i.e., ever since the creation of the world, Betzalel was intended to be the Sanctuary's artisan. (*Midrash Rabba*)

Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations (Ex. 31:16)

The Hebrew word for "throughout their generations," "l'dorotam," is written without the letter vav; thus it can also be read "l'diratam," "throughout their abodes." When a Jew makes his home "Shabbosdik" in honor of the holy Sabbath, "the table is set, the candles are lit and his bed is made," the Divine Presence declares, "I will dwell with you." If there is no Shabbat atmosphere in the home it declares, "This is not the abode of an Israelite." (*Sefat Emet*)

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN AND SPIRITUAL LEADER



This Shabbat is known as "Shabbat Para," when we read the special portion of the Torah about the red heifer. The ashes of the red heifer (of which only nine have ever existed) have the power to remove the spiritual impurity caused by contact with a dead body.

As Maimonides writes: "There were nine red heifers from the time we were commanded until the destruction of the Second Holy Temple. The first was prepared by Moses our Teacher, the second by Ezra, and seven more between Ezra and the destruction. The tenth will be prepared by King Moshiach, may he be speedily revealed, Amen, may it be G-d's will."

Maimonides impassioned "outburst," as it were - "may he be speedily revealed, Amen, may it be G-d's will" - is somewhat surprising, given its context in a book of Jewish law. Moreover, even if we were to make "allowances" for such a prayer, surely it would seem more appropriate in his Laws of Kings.

The explanation, as Maimonides himself provides elsewhere, is that believing in Moshiach and actively awaiting his arrival is a perpetual mitzva. A Jew longs for Moshiach because he feels incomplete without him. He hopes for Moshiach "all the day" because until he arrives, a crucial element is missing.

Accordingly, the mere mention of Moshiach, however indirect or tangential, has the power to arouse a passionate response in the Jewish soul. Even the slightest reference elicits a heartfelt prayer, that G-d should fulfill His promise and send Moshiach at once.

The red heifer is particularly associated with the Final Redemption, as it states, "Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean." This refers to the sprinkling of the ashes of the red heifer, which will remove our present state of spiritual impurity (due to contact with the dead).

In the tiny interval that remains, let us remember that every positive action we do draws nearer the day when "The spirit of uncleanness I will remove from the earth," with the coming of Moshiach, "may he be speedily revealed, Amen, may it be G-d's will."

Pinchus Feldman

Rabbi Pinchus Feldman OAM

Smile its Friday! A Jewish young man was seeing a psychiatrist for an eating and sleeping disorder. "I am so obsessed with my mother... As soon as I go to sleep, I start dreaming, and everyone in my dream turns into my mother. I wake up in such a state, all I can do is go downstairs and eat a piece of toast." The psychiatrist replies: "What, just one piece of toast, for a big boy like you?"

Shang-Chai

By Ariel Galian

Thirty years ago, as a man lay ill in a Caracas Venezuela hospital; he was visited daily by a Lubavitcher rabbi. Soon he began to put on tefilin, sing Jewish songs and even dance with his committed visitor. This tale came full circle two years ago in Shanghai, China.

Rabbi Sholom and Dina Greenberg were a young, idealistic couple embarking upon the mission of a lifetime. Heeding the exhortation of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, they decided to become part of the small Jewish community in Shanghai.

"We were looking for a place where Jews needed Judaism but couldn't find it," says Dina, who was raised in Cleveland, Ohio, where her parents are shlichim, emissaries, of the Rebbe. "It's every Jew's right to know about his/her religion."

Becoming the spiritual leader in a small community, in a Communist nation where Judaism is not recognized, entails difficulties. Before anything else, the Greenberg's needed a home and a meeting place for their congregation. This is where the Caracas and Shanghai stories meet.

Shortly after their arrival in Shanghai, Dina met a woman who told her, "You help people, now I want to help you." Her father was the man who had been ill in Caracas. To repay the favor, she and her husband offered to assist the Greenberg's in obtaining an apartment and community meeting place-not an easy task in crowded Shanghai.

There was one hurdle. The husband needed permission from his boss in Atlanta, who controlled property in Shanghai. Serendipitously, the boss was vice president of the Lubavitcher shul in Atlanta-so the needed approval was quickly granted! The Greenberg's had their home, and the Jewish community of Shanghai had a place to meet. The connections between Chabad in Caracas, Atlanta and Shanghai were all part of a dream inspired by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, says Dina. He sent shlichim all over the world to offer Judaism to Jews who want to learn more about their roots.

The Greenberg's mission in China required deep sacrifice. Dina and Shalom have siblings who are shlichim in Argentina, Israel, Alaska, Texas, Connecticut, and Ohio and were raised in homes that were "always

open to people not necessarily at the same level of observance." But to transfer this experience to a distant and immensely foreign locale would be daunting.

The Jewish community in Shanghai dates back to 1843 with the arrival of Sephardic Jews from Iraq and India. With an influx of Russian Jews in the 1920s, the population reached 1,700. During World War II, about 20,000 Eastern European Jews escaped to Shanghai, as it was one of the few places they were accepted. When the wings of Communism spread over China in 1949, most of the Jews there immigrated to Israel or the United States. Today, Shanghai is a modern metropolis with sleek buildings and renovated roads. "It's becoming the Manhattan of China," says Dina. Yet, one just needs to peer down a side alleyway to see a very different picture. Filth and poverty are endemic. Many of the locals don't even have electricity. Foreigners, including the 250 resident Jews, are immune to the squalor.

When the Greenbergs arrived in Shanghai, they were unceremoniously greeted by the Chinese government. "They wanted to know what we were doing here," says Dina, who is deliberately reticent when discussing governmental issues. "This was the biggest obstacle. We didn't know if they were going to allow our community to practice Judaism."

The largest Communist republic in the world, however, was not going to sway the Greenberg's from their life mission. They remembered why they were there. "The Rebbe said that our mission in life was to help others," says Dina.

After their initial scare with the government, an accord was reached. The Greenberg's agreed to permit only foreign passport holders to attend functions. Today, the Chinese government "keeps careful tabs" on the Greenberg's. There have been other challenges. Keeping kosher in Shanghai is about as easy as obtaining snow in the Bahamas. Kosher food must be imported from California or Australia.

The cost of shipping, along with a steep

customs tax, means paying 300% more for meat than average. With Chabad a "franchised" operation, the Greenberg's, who provide weekly Shabbat meals for 35-40 people, must personally raise their own funds.

For the Greenberg's first Shabbat in Shanghai, Dina experimented with serving Chinese-style cuisine. The guests protested that they came "for gefilte fish and roasted chicken."

Services are conducted according to Torah law. There is a mechitza (partition) between the men and the women. "At home many of the people who come to our services would never pray with a mechitza or have contact with those who do. Their opinion of observant people changes," says Dina.

Far from imposing their own religious views, the Greenberg's want to be available so if congregants choose to learn more, "We can help." They have organized Bar and Bat Mitzvah classes as well as adult education classes on various levels.

The community has begun to include Jews who, ironically, would never have been involved in Jewish pursuits if they were not in Shanghai. "People are more willing to embrace their Judaism in Shanghai," Dina says. "Many say that they never knew that Judaism has a philosophy. 'If I would have known,' they tell us, 'perhaps I would not have (first) explored Buddhism.'"

Even with the existence of a Jewish community, China is still not the ideal place to raise a Jewish family. This is felt poignantly by the Greenberg's, who home school their young children. Recognizing that education is the key to Jewish development, however, the Greenberg's have begun a campaign to create a local preschool.

Despite the challenges, Dina feels that the Jewish community is becoming more "aware and knowledgeable" of its Judaism. Inspired by the Rebbe, the Greenberg's have created something in Shanghai that eludes many other Jewish communities. "We're all together," says Dina. *Reprinted with permission from the Cleveland Jewish News*

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Moshiach

The Talmud states, "In the future time, G-d will make a banquet for the righteous from the flesh of the Leviathan." This banquet is replete with spiritual allusions: the Leviathan, the Wild Ox, the "preserved wine" - each has its profound mystical significance. At the same time, however, this will also be a physical banquet. For, the ultimate reward in the days of Moshiach will not be granted in the Garden of Eden, "where there is neither eating nor drinking," but in the World of Resurrection, to souls garbed in bodies.

(From a talk of the Rebbe, Parshat Balak, 5751/1991)

It Happened Once

Rabbi Shmuel Hanagid was a medieval poet who lived in Moslem Spain from 993-1056 of the Common Era. One of his most prized possessions was a tiny Torah scroll he had written on special parchment, which he always carried with him wherever he went.

Rabbi Shmuel Hanagid's love for calligraphy was passed down to his sons, who even as young children demonstrated an aptitude for lettering. By the age of 8, his son Yehosef had already transcribed his father's book of poems, Ben Tehillim. Another work, entitled Ben Mishlei, was copied by his son Elyasaf at age 6½. Rabbi Shmuel wanted his third book, Ben Kohelet, to be copied by his son Yehuda, but the boy unfortunately passed away before he could do so. Rabbi Shmuel Hanagid was grief-stricken, as he had loved his son very much. In the end he transcribed the book himself, and dedicated it to the boy's memory.

Rabbi Shmuel had many enemies. When he came under attack, he was forced to defend himself and wage war. He was a fearless and successful fighter, but it was during one of these battles that he lost his precious manuscript, Ben Kohelet. He was especially distressed by the loss, as it was the only copy in existence.

Rabbi Shmuel returned home to what he hoped would be a life of tranquility and scholarship. However, this proved impossible, as he found himself besieged by numerous requests for holy books from Torah scholars near and far, who complained about their desperate shortage. (Remember, this was before the invention of the printing press, when all reading materials had to be painstakingly copied by hand.)

Rabbi Shmuel thus became the founder of a famous institute for copying Jewish holy books, with a large number of scribes in his employ. Indeed, he was responsible for developing a new method of "mass" production, whereby transcribers would sit in a half-circle around a single "reader" in the middle and faithfully reproduce his words.

Thanks to Rabbi Shmuel Hanagid, Jewish holy books became much more readily available to the common man. He also took pains to bind them in attractive bindings. Copies were sent to far-flung Jewish communities around the world. Apprentice scribes flocked to the new school, begging to be accepted. It

was said that Rabbi Shmuel Hanagid could determine a person's character just by looking at his handwriting.

One day a potential scribe arrived at the school and asked to be accepted as an apprentice. When Rabbi Shmuel asked him to provide a sample of his calligraphy, he took one look at the handwriting and pronounced him to be a professional plagiarist. The man was immediately taken aback, and admitted that he had been involved in producing forgeries. However, he said that he was happy to have been found out, and promised to amend his ways. Rabbi Shmuel decided to take him on as a student.

Several years passed, until one day the former plagiarist brought Rabbi Shmuel a copy of the Talmudic Tractate Bava Metzia he had transcribed for his approval. After inspecting his work, Rabbi Shmuel told him that he could see from his writing that he had been "cured," and would never again fall prey to temptation. The man was so happy that he kissed his mentor's hands and gave him a small manuscript as a token of his affection. Rabbi Shmuel could hardly believe his eyes: it was an exact copy of his book, Ben Kohelet, that had been lost years before!

The student then told Rabbi Shmuel that as a result of his former criminal associations he had met a man who boasted of having written a book of poetry. Indeed, the man was very fond of quoting "his" poems at length. By that time, the student was well acquainted with Rabbi Shmuel's work and recognized his style. He realized that the poems could have only been authored by him, and learned them by heart, word for word and line by line. He then transcribed them into a book as a gift for his wonderful teacher, who had refused to give up on him and given him a second chance. Rabbi Shmuel Hanagid's joy knew no bounds. Not only had he been proven a good judge of character, but the beloved manuscript he had thought was lost to him forever was restored to him in its entirety.

Volunteers are required for Shul Security at The Yeshiva Centre
CSG training session for volunteers will be held on wed 18th March 2009.
To participate please approach Zeev Gavson or Call 0412 1800 12



Candle Lighting Times Friday 30th January 2009

City	In	Out
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Surfers Par	5:49pm	6:41pm
Melbourne	7:26pm	8:22pm

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