

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 20 Adar 5770, Parshat Parah. We read from two Sifrei Torah and read a special Haftorah. We omit Av HaRachamim.

Mazel Tov to Isaac Ovadia upon today's celebration of his Bar Mitzvah. Mazel Tov to Isaac's parents Rami & Rose Ovadia, and to the entire family.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 352 Hz) (p. 540 S) (p. 331 Hi) (p. 484 AS)

KI TISSA כִּי תִשָּׂא

1. In Chapter 30 the Torah predicts that the special Anointing Oil that Moshe used for the anointing of Aharon and his sons would also be used for the future. The eternal nature of this oil, according to the Talmud (Horyot 11b), is that the oil would be used for centuries and centuries, and later was to be hidden with other utensils of the Mishkan. At the end of the First Temple period, King Yoshiyahu (Kings II, Chapters 22 and 23) not only hid the oil but also the Holy Ark, and Cherubim and other items of the Temple. Rashi noted that from our text we learn that the Tabernacle items are still intact for some time in the future. Although we will dream and pray of the reestablishment of the Holy Temple in Yerushalayim so that these items will hopefully be discovered and utilized, we are content today in renewing archeological investigations to see what can be discovered in our time. Just recently a 10th century B.C.E. section of a wall, possibly built at the time of King Solomon, has been found in Yerushalayim. These discoveries renew our interest and delight in any archeological proof that our traditions are true and intact, and waiting for future revitalization.

2. The debacle of the Golden Calf is one that is very important in the biblical narrative, and conceptually in Jewish history. When Moshe ascended Mount Sinai, Aharon and Chur were the ones appointed to be temporary leaders of the people. We do not see Chur involved in the Golden Calf scene, which led the rabbis of the Midrash to create the traditional story that Bnei Yisrael killed Chur when he opposed what they were doing. The Ramban poses that the people were striving to create a substitute for Moshe Rabbeinu who was not there when they expected him to return, but they were not intending to create an idol. This is difficult when Aharon introduces the Golden Calf to the Jewish people with the expression: "This is your god..." Aharon's involvement leads the rabbis to insist that he was punished. The punishment came in the form of the death of two of his sons. Couldn't we make a good case for Aharon's defense that Chur was killed? Wasn't he performing under duress? On the other hand, idolatry is a sin for which you would sacrifice your life. The issue is quite complicated, too long for this paragraph, although one that is complicated enough. The rabbinic decision is that Aharon was guilty in his involvement with the sin of the Golden Calf.

3. In this narrative the Jewish people earned the description of being a stiff-necked people (32:9). Many rabbinic commentators claim that the stubbornness of the Jewish people would serve them well historically, for they would be required to be very stubborn in continuing to

embrace Jewish tradition while in exile. Had it not been for this stiff-necked quality, the Jewish people would have assimilated and disappeared from the planet. The Midrash says that among the human beings, the Jews are the ones who are labeled as stiff-necked. In the animal world there is one animal and one fowl that are mentioned specifically as being those that have the quality of "chutzpah." Which animal and bird are identified in the Midrash? (Shemot Rabbah)

4. While atop Mount Sinai Hashem told Moshe the people had become totally corrupt, and Moshe did not respond at that time. Only when he descended from the mountain holding the Tablets did he respond in a fit of rage. Upon seeing the Golden Calf and the Jewish people dancing and singing, he threw down and broke the Tablets. We realize that "seeing is believing," but certainly Moshe believed what Hashem told him about what the Jewish people were doing. It is not that you do not believe somebody is truthful, especially in this case when the truthful being is the Almighty, but to respond to it, that's when the "seeing" part is critical in eliciting the emotional response that Moshe did not have until he actually viewed the scene while coming down from the mountain. This is human nature. To hear about something and even to believe that it is happening will not evoke the same emotional response as when you see it with your own eyes. Then the additional involvement of one's senses creates a deeper emotional impression upon the individual. This is what provoked Moshe in this case and it is true in all situations for all human beings in responding to a strong, provocative situation.

5. The only tribe of the Jewish people who proved themselves totally loyal to Hashem was the tribe of Levi. In the days of Stanislaw August, 18th century King of Poland, there was an incident that was quite revealing to the student of bible. The king had a financial adviser by the name of Yissachar Ber HaLevi Lehman. Among the other members of the king's inner cabinet, the advisers could not tolerate having a Jew among them, especially a Jew who possessed an extremely important post in government. They complained to the king in amazement. How was it possible to grant such trust in a Jew, especially in financial matters? It was thoroughly understood and well-known among the people that Jews were heavily inclined in their pursuit of monetary gain. "Even in the desert", said these advisers, "these Jews ran and sided with a Golden Calf, even so soon after the Divine Revelation at Mount Sinai." The king, who was known to read the bible from time to time, responded very cleverly to these anti-Semitic advisers. "You should know," said the king, "my Jewish financial adviser Lehman is from the tribe of Levi, and about these members of the Levitical tribe it is stated they did not worship the Golden Calf. In fact, they were the ones who were the most loyal to the Almighty, and even avenged this treachery for the Lord against those who worshipped the Golden Calf." (From "M'otzreinu HaYashan")

6. At the end of the discussion of the three Pilgrimage Festivals, Hashem provides assurance that when the men have assembled in Yerushalayim during these holiday

periods no foreign army will become desirous of the land and invade the land of Israel. It further states that no man will desire the land (34:24). There seem to be two separate promises made by the Almighty. One is that no foreign army will invade during the time when all the people are involved in observing the holiday in the centralized capital of Yerushalayim. The second involves no robber or thief coming to plunder property when the owner is absent observing a pilgrimage to Yerushalayim. These are wonderful reassurances made by the Almighty and are extremely practical in light of the biblical mandate for all male property owners to vacate their properties and leave them defenseless when they go to observe the holiday in the capital. Even in those days the mobility of armies was swift and the people on the frontier might not have been thoroughly alerted by an oncoming advance prior to the holiday itself. This verse, though, takes on additional meaning when one realizes what occurred in 1973. When the Jewish people were observing Yom Kippur, the Arabs knew that the defenses of the country would be compromised by the religious observance of the people. Hence they chose that day to invade which is exactly what the Torah was concerned about. The truth is we require Hashem's assurances when it comes to protection during religious observance. May it come to pass today that we should adhere to the words of Torah in order to be assured of the Almighty's involvement in the granting of these biblical promises. (RED)

7. The Torah states, "You shall not cook a calf in its mother's milk." (34:26.) The Netziv wrote that it was customary in those days that people would fertilize their fields with this type of milk and meat combinations. The usage of animal protein for fertilization is still used today; it is not just an ancient custom as indicated by the Netziv. My father o'h owned a fresh fish store in the downtown Washington D.C. area. His business was retail and wholesale. In the filleting of fish there was a lot of material that was expendable as garbage. There were standing orders especially from companies that were involved in the landscaping of foreign embassies on Embassy Row in a certain section of the Washington area. They had a standing order of fish heads, tails, and skins because they felt that it was excellent fertilizer for the landscaping of these embassies which were kept as beautiful attractions, enhancing the foreign presence representing those countries in America. My father was glad to have these customers for otherwise these fish parts were garbage and of no value to him. He was able to gather further income by being able to sell the entire fish. This is a small detail but it came to the fore when I read the Netziv's comments on the possibility of gaining benefit from mixing milk and meat together. (RED)

MAFTIR

(p. 652 Hz) (p. 898 S) (p. 584 Hi) (p. 838 AS)

PARAH פרה

The Maftir discusses the preparation of the Red Heifer, which was burnt at this time of year by the Jews in the desert, and to be sprinkled with its ashes and be cleansed from impurity in order to be eligible to join in the Pesach sacrifice. (See Shulchan Aruch with Mishnah Berurah O.C.

685:1.) There is a difference of opinion among codifiers whether the reading of Parah is a Torah obligation today. To be mindful of this opinion one should concentrate at the reading to fulfill this mitzvah. According to all opinions women are not obligated in this mitzvah.

HAFTORAH

(p. 999 Hz) (p. 1194 S) (p. 960 Hi) (p. 1216 AS)

EZEKIEL יחזקאל

This week's haftorah, read in conjunction with Parshat Parah, describes the Jewish people's state of purity in the time of Mashiach. The prophet Yechezkel says in Hashem's name, "And I will sprinkle pure waters upon you which will purify you from all your impurities and repulsive actions." Yechezkel refers here to the Jewish people's ultimate perfection when Hashem will totally cleanse them from sin. The prophet compares this experience to purification from ritual impurity. It is worthwhile to focus on the particular symbolism he used. He did not compare their purification to the traditional immersion process, rather to the purifying waters of the Red Heifer. This detailed and mysterious procedure purified one from his direct contact with a corpse. Such contact transferred a severe state of ritual impurity which required a unique purification process. Yechezkel's symbolism suggests a direct corollary between association with sin and association with death. Apparently, ultimate removal of any relationship to sin is similar to removal of the ritual effects of death.

SHABBAT HALACHAH

"Remember the Shabbat to sanctify it." (20:8) From this verse we derive the mitzvah of reciting Kiddush at the beginning of Shabbat. From the Torah, the recitation alone is required, but Chazal added the requirement of saying it over wine, immediately preceding the Seudah. Kiddush in the morning, however, is entirely Mi'drabbanan. Women are also obligated to observe the mitzvah of Kiddush. One can fulfill the mitzvah by listening and answering "Amen." However, the person making Kiddush must be a Gadol – over the age of Bar Mitzvah. The Ramban writes that the mitzvah of remembering the Shabbat is accomplished each time we refer to the day of the week. In Hebrew, the days of the week are just numbers counted towards Shabbat (Yom Rishon L'Shabbat, Yom Sheni L'Shabbat, etc.) Only Shabbat has a name. In this manner we demonstrate that Shabbat is the focal point of the week.

Sponsored by Rita & Ezra Shabot & family, Nina & Moshe Kishik & family, Vivian & David Farhi & family in honor of their nephew Isaac's Bar Mitzvah