

Points to Ponder
Ki Sisa 5778

Ki Tisa (30:12) – Why do we say Tisa instead of some other word implying counting? **Divrei Yisrael** suggests that in swimming against the tide of daily living, one needs to raise his head to be able to swim against the crushing waves of the challenges of life. If one keeps his head out of the water, he will not drown. The **Avnei Nezer** explains that this is the responsibility of a parent to teach a child to swim – to give him the ability to keep his head clear of the challenges and focused on Hashem's plans for him and the world.

And you shall make a Kiyur (30:18) – Why is the Kiyur not included with the other Keilim? Why does it appear in Ki Sisa? The author of the **Sefer Bas Ayin** suggests that it is only after Chit HaEigel that the concept of Tumah existed in the Mishkan. Thus, this Parsha that postdates the sin, includes a Kli called the Kiyur for once there was a Cheit and Tumah, there was a need to have a place to remove it before entering the Mikdash.

The nation saw that Moshe delayed in coming down from the mountain (32:1) – **Rav Simcha Zissel** of Kelm notes that the Cheit HaEigel happened when Bnei Yisrael thought Moshe was late and then they panicked. Panic causes people to make rash decisions that they would not ordinarily make when things are calm. The rush to do something and ask questions for understanding later are often a sure-fire way to sin. **Rav Yaakov Moshe Katz Shlita** adds that there are three lessons to learn from the Parsha: a) to realize that there is always a solution to our problems, a way to repair the difficulty in which we find ourselves, b) not to panic, but to consider the situation carefully before reacting. c) to daven to Hashem to help us find the most effective way of dealing with the situation.

Who is for Hashem join me (32:26) – **The Zohar HaKadosh** identifies part of the sin of the Eigel in the words of the people, **אלה אלהיך ישראל**. The Zohar notes that the people quantified the concept of Godliness and as a result limited the influence of Hashem in our world. **Rav Yaakov Nagen Shlita** added that the antidote was Moshe's use of the words **מי לה' אלי**. **מי** is indicative of a relationship that transcends a series of questions. I know who the other is, even though I cannot answer every single issue. Trust, belief and Love work in transcendental ways as well. When you know the relationship but realize that its depth surpasses quantitative calculation, you have made it about who and not about what. When that exists with Hashem, it fosters Emunah and prevents sin.

You will see my back but my front will not be seen (33:23) – What is the back and the front? **Rav Elimelech Biderman Shlita** notes that the Torah is telling us that sometimes we do not understand Hashem's plans for us until it is complete. In the moment we do not get it. But we can see it only later. He likens the situation to a visitor to the cockpit of a plane who enters and sees a lot of buttons and switches and immediately points to one and asks the captain "what does this one do?" The captain asks him why he is interested in the specifics of one button without awareness about what the others do in unison. The same is true with Hashem – <When you look at the specifics without the picture you can easily become a fool>. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often remind us that this is what happens when we say Brachamim U'B'Ratzon – that our Tefillos should be accepted with the will of Hashem. He noted in the name of **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** that he would often daven to Hashem not to have to leave Europe and Baruch Hashem those Tefillos were not accepted. Sometimes we do not get it in the moment but in the long run...

Hashem passed before him and declared "Hashem Hashem (34:6) – The Talmud (Rosh Hashana 17b) tells us that before teaching Moshe the secret of the 13 Middos, Hashem appeared as a Shaliach Tzibbur. Why did he need to do that? **Imrei Binah**, suggests that this hints to us that even according to the opinion that it is enough to merely say the words, one must say them like a Shaliach Tzibbur. In **יש** on behalf of ourselves; **לא ידע ובסיל לא יבין את זאת** other words, it is insufficient to recite the **י"ג מידות** on behalf of ourselves; we must invoke them with the welfare of the entire community in mind. When we cry out with all our might pleading with Hashem to tear up any evil decrees against us, instead of only focusing on our own needs, we must endeavor to pray as a Shaliach Tzibbur by magnanimously moving outside ourselves and also focusing on the needs of others. **Rav Yissochar Frand Shlita** notes that to combat the natural tendency to think only of ourselves, the sefer **Mikdash Mordechai** comments Hashem first descended in a cloud. This teaches us that when life is going well, it is easy to think about others. However, when a person feels like he is inside of a tumultuous cloud, grappling with his own overwhelming struggles, it is much more challenging to do so. Therefore, Hashem specifically approached Moshe in a cloud to hint that even at such times, we are expected to selflessly empathize with others and pray on their behalf, an act which is guaranteed to merit Hashem's mercy and compassion.

And the whole nation that you are in shall see the great things Hashem does with you (34:10) - **Ramban** holds that he is not sure if the remembrance of the Cheit HaEigel is for the future or only for the generation itself. Why should we remember the sin? What good is the guilty complex? The Gemara (Avoda Zara) explains that the point of the Eigel was to teach us the concept of Teshuva D'Rabim. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often quote the Mogen Avraham who adds that there is a Mitzva to read the Parsha of Cheit HaEigel in the same way that we read Parshas Zachor. The point of this reading is to remember that even if we do the worst Avaira in the world there is a hope of Teshuva if we do Teshuva properly. Why do we not make the big deal that we do about Zachor, with an announcement and the big rush to Shul? Rav Schachter added that announcements bring an embarrassment to life so we do not highlight it with Yotzros and special Haftaros but the obligation to read and remember still remains.

Haftarah : When Achav saw Eliyahu he asked him if he were the destroyer of Yisrael. Eliyahu answered that I am not the destroyer but rather it is you (Melachim Alef 18) – **Rav Moshe Stav Shlita** pointed out that Eliyahu is one of the most difficult Neviim to understand. In his day, he was clearly not popular and yet, he is the one saddled with the opportunity to reveal the impending Geulah. Why? Rav Stav explained that Eliyahu's primary mode of prophesy was Kanaut. A Kanai is not always popular in the moment in that Kannaut is an unshakable, internal bonding to truth irrespective of Chessed in the moment. Thus, Eliyahu's Emes remains and stands the test of time but the need of the moment proves elusive (as is clear in the episode when he is at Har Sinai). Similarly it can be noted that Hashem combines the Rav Chessed with Emes.