

## Parshat Ki Tisa: Covenant II; Constant Challenge

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Before the Torah recounts the destruction of the first *luchot*, there is a very vivid description of their lofty greatness. Why was this not written when Hashem first gave the *luchot* to Moshe? In Megilat Esther we read how Esther sent Hasach to Mordechai to find out what had happened, “*Mah zeh v'al mah zeh.*” The Gemara explains that she was really asking, “Did they perhaps violate the Torah as represented by the *luchot*, “*Mi zeh u'mizeh hem ketuvim,*” meaning, inscribed on both sides? What is the connection between these two verses? What was the difference between the first and second *luchot*?

Chazal say, “Greater will be the revelation of the second than the first.” With the first *luchot*, Torah was given to the Jewish people as a gift. With the second *luchot* came the need for arduous study through the application of the thirteen principles of interpretation. The dynamic process of understanding the oral Torah makes it vibrant and alive. It is the spiritual strength derived from these studies that have helped Israel survive centuries of persecution. The Siftei Chaim brings the verse in Yirmiyahu, “My word is like a fire.” The flames are associated with the giving of the first *luchot*. The coals connote the second *luchot*. The more it is stoked, the greater the fire. Similarly, the more one invests in studying the oral Torah the more light one creates.

The prophet Chagai said, “Greater was the glory of the second temple than the first.” The first *Beit Hamikdash* represents Leah Imeinu while the second signifies Rachel. Rachel is the aspect of serving Hashem through strenuous work, as evidenced by Yaakov laboring seven long years for her. Leah is the

gift of spirituality. During the first *Beit Hamikdash* there were open miracles. In contrast, the Divine Presence was hidden during the second *luchot* and required much effort to reveal its holiness.

Chazal say, “*Uv'torato yehegeh yomam v'laila.*” You shall toil in the Torah day and night. The greatness of Torah is that we need to be actively involved in it. Esther asked Mordechai, do the people understand that the entire creation is based on Torah and that it will never change one iota no matter the time or place? There is a special quality in the second *luchot* not found in the first, called struggle. Each of us must fan the flames of Torah, to be inspired by it, to make it a part of ourselves, to understand it deeper and to discover the beauty within it.

With the first *luchot*, the writing and the material were both from heaven. The stones of the *luchot* shaped like a heart, symbolizes the heart of Israel in which the words of the Torah were engraved. Torah is not only meant to be informational but transformational. Because the stones were from heaven, the heart no longer identified with the *yetzer hara*. This was the level of Gan Eden, a divine gift that transcended material limitations. The second tablets, hewn by Moshe, reflected their fall after the sin of the golden calf. Although the writing was from Hashem, the material was earthly. The Torah although more restrictive on this level, lowered itself to provide a corrective for our selfishness and impurity.

The Ohr Gedalyahu notes that the writing on the *luchot* were like the soul. The actual tablets were the body. When the first *luchot* were given, the Jewish people were elevated to the level of Adam before the sin. The writing was

able to pierce through them and their bodies became like the *luchot*, completely nullified to the soul. After the sin, the second *luchot* were given with the challenge of *pasul lecha*. We ourselves must purify our bodies so that the spirituality of the writing can permeate within us. Torah is *ohr hameir*- it enlightens and impacts. Our struggle with it is meant to help us grow and transform ourselves.

Initially when the *luchot* were given, they were ethereal and weightless. When they came face to face with the golden calf, the holy letters flew away. The *luchot* then became too heavy to hold and they fell and shattered. In a metaphorical sense, every Jew resembles those *luchot*. We too are composed of a physical core and a soul. The soul is fastened inside us like the divine script on the stones. Just as the physical body must be fed, the soul too must be nourished by the Torah and *mitzvot*. If we neglect it, then life becomes stressful and burdensome just as the *luchot* became too weighty to bear. The more we tend the soul with life giving Torah and *mitzvot*, the greater will be our serenity and inner happiness.

The value of the *luchot* only became apparent before it was destroyed. That is why it was described at that point. Rav Dessler explains that its shards were kept in the *aron* to remind us what we must aspire to. Our entire being should yearn to reach that state of total submission to the will of Hashem.

Let's appreciate the profound power of Torah. Let's set aside time to learn, to discover our personal fire and to make it a part of ourselves. And let its light impact us for eternity.

## Three Elements of Prayer

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The Rambam tells us that *shemone esrei* is the key prayer of the three *tefilot* we pray every day. It consists of three sections, *shevach*, *bakasha*, and *hodaah*. *Shevach* is praise of Hashem, *bakasha* refers to requests, and *hodaah* is thanks. These three segments are fundamental to the way we

view the world. The most fundamental principle in Judaism is belief in the existence of Hashem. David Hamelech says in Tehilim, “*Ha'shamayim misparim k'evod Kel.* The heavens proclaim the glory of Hashem.” If we open our eyes, we cannot help but be inspired by the beautiful world Hashem created. The brilliant sun, the clear moon, the twinkling

stars, the intricate cloud formations, and cool breezes stir within us an inescapable urge to sing the praises of the Being that fashioned all this. We know there's only one source, the Almighty who created this amazing world. We give *shevach*, praise for all the good He bestows upon us every day.

Continued on page 2



## Three Elements of Prayer

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman  
Continued from page 1

Much of our prayers are *shevach*. In Shacharit, the *pisukei d'zimra* is full of praise for Hashem. *Perek Shira*, an early form of prayer attributed to David Hamelech, speaks about all the different creatures and how they each sing Hashem's praises. The earth, water, springs, insects, fish, birds, and animals all laud Hashem in their own way. It's important to recite *pesukei d'zimra* with a lot of *kavanah* (intention). In many shuls, the congregation uses a special *nigun* (tune) when reciting this section, just as every creature has their unique song.

The second section of *shemonei esrei* is *bakasha*. Human needs are almost infinite and only Hashem can really provide for them. We request many good things and hope that our fears will be allayed so we that we will not have to face suffering. Our requests include physical hopes and spiritual hopes, hope for forgiveness for our sins and hope for the redemption for the people of Israel.

The third section is *hodoah*. After Hashem responds to our needs, we thank him for

everything He gives to mankind, and to us personally. We thank Him for the food we eat, for giving us the strength to get out of bed, and for being able to put on our shoes. We thank Him for the small miracles and for His constant presence in our lives.

May Hashem help us to pray with renewed vigor every day, with the right intention and fervor, so that our prayers will be accepted in heaven *l'tova*.

## Adar: Achieving Alignment

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Chazal teach us that whatever exists in the physical world exists within us as well. Man's intellect corresponds to the sun. His emotions parallel the moon. Like the rational mind, the sun signifies clarity, stability, and strength. Like the emotional state of a person, the moon waxes and wanes. It glows only at night. This is similar to our feelings, which are not always expressed outwardly. In a leap year, when we add an extra month of Adar, to recalibrate the solar and lunar years, we are meant to focus inward.

The verse says, "*V'yadata hayom vahasheivota el levavecha*. You shall know today and place it on your heart." The months of Adar are a time to work on making our knowledge part of our emotional makeup, so that our intellect and emotions will work hand in hand. The Kotzker Rebbe taught that the distance between the mind and heart is greater than heaven and earth. The ability to know something intellectually and to then translate it emotionally is one of our greatest challenges. This is why we need two Adars, the first Adar to align our intellect and emotions and the second Adar to act upon it.

The Baalei Mussar teach that one way to do this is to work on one's *middot*. As Rav Gedalya Shor points out, the inability to connect the mind and heart is due to *timtum halev* (blockage of the heart). If our intellectual knowledge is clear, we can overcome the desires of our heart. The amount of Torah available to us today is a thousand times more than our ancestors ever had. Nonethe-

less, it hasn't necessarily translated to our heart. The knowledge we have surrounds us, but it hasn't become a part of us. In previous generations knowing meant obligation. But today we float from one idea to the next. In his letter to his son, the Ramban adjures, "When you get up from studying, think about what you have learned and see what you can implement." After listening to an inspiring lecture or learning a piece of Torah, let us take one idea, focus on it, and make it a part of us. The more real it becomes, the more it obligates us.

Just as the solar and lunar year become aligned in a leap year, we have to work at balancing the physical and spiritual aspects of our life. The solar year represents the mundane, physical, world. It is stable, precisely calculated, and measured by the continuous motion of the earth. The lunar calendar is reminiscent of the spiritual world, ever changing and determined by man. The moon is smaller and reflects the sun, which symbolizes the prominence of the visible, external world in contrast to the more modest nature of the spiritual world. Adar is the month both closest and removed from Nissan. With the birth and death of Moshe a great spiritual light came down and then departed from the world during this period.

Purim is the ultimate meshing of the physical and spiritual worlds. *Purim katan* symbolizes the spiritual hidden world while *Purim gadol* signifies the larger, revealed physical world. Purim is about elevating the physical to the spiritual. In some years we need the *katan* of pure spirituality to enable us to reorient

ourselves so we don't get lost in the physicality. During a leap year, in the *mussaf* prayer of Rosh Chodesh we add the phrase *v'chaparat pasha* (let our sins be atoned). When the body rebels against the soul, the physical and spiritual clash. The leap year helps us mesh these two realms so that our sins are rectified.

The Siftei Chayim cites the Maharal that articulating one's thoughts into words brings them down from the spiritual to the physical realm. The more one speaks the more physical a person becomes. The duality of speech and silence is hinted at in the *megillah*. Mordechai is called "*Ish yehudi*" and "*ish yemini*." He was a descendant of Binyamin, the son of Rachel. Rachel knew when to be silent and when to speak and Mordechai inherited this ability. Mordechai knew that the Jews would eventually be saved. Yet he kept silent so that they would repent and pray. It then says that he cried out in prayer. Esther also had the power to be silent and to speak. She did not reveal her origins to Achashveirosh. Yet when Mordechai asked her to speak before the king she put her life on the line to save the Jews.

A deep and sensitive person can sit with something a while before speaking. When we are comfortable with the realm of inner silence we can then share from that spiritual world with others. In the first Adar we are silent. When the second Adar comes we can meld physicality and spirituality in perfect unison, read the *megilla* out loud and scream with joy.