

This Week In Torah *Ki Tisa*

The chronology in this week's *parasha* seems a bit wacky. The last 3 weeks of readings have included the following things: Torah has been revealed, interpersonal laws have been mapped out, building of the Tabernacle has become and the eternal light is burning. *Ki Tisa* starts off with a census and then a introduction of the holy artisan Betselel, then comes the importance of Shabbat. Then—BAM!—chapter 32-34 has the epic drama of the Golden Calf and the second giving of laws. It seems out of order—chapters 32 thru 34 should appear after portion *Yitro*, in particular right after chapter 20 when Torah is revealed.

As rational minds try to grope with the clearly lack of time orientation. Perhaps there is a greater metaphysical understanding. Our ancestors are growing with conviction since the moment of revelation. Under their banner of “*Na’aseh v’nishmah...* we do and we hear”, *mitzvot* guide them to grow stronger in faith. But what if there is a stumble or a mistake or longing doubts? That is where the Golden Calf narrative comes in—how do we deal with sin, transgression and mistakes?... or doubt? The texts that surround the Gold Calf narrative are guides for the Israelites and for us.

This week's *sedra* begins with an individual who has a discerning heart—Betzelel, a craftsman who has talent which was planted within him by God. After the Golden Calf, chapter 33 has petitionary prayers by Moses for forgiveness in the unusual guise of urging for metaphysical understandings. Shedding possessions but still being compelled to have faith in God's omnipresence. Thus, the coping skills for dealing with transgressions are here—inner-confidence to overcome personal flaws and a willingness to grow from sin as consequences are acknowledged and repentance is performed.

The 13th century Spanish scholar known as the RaMBaN wrote that the Golden Calf was a symbol of the people's insecurity and their desperate need for Moses; the Israelites were not looking for a replacement for God but the security of God's presence. There was need to know that they were not abandoned. The reassurance for us that emerged from all this was best summarized by Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav who wrote: “Things

that can be broken are things that can be repaired.” And made even strong at times as a result.

Here is Torah—chronology is put aside as a valuable lesson is learned. Emerging from a dark and painful period of our own doing can let us understand that faith in God is echoed with a durable faith in the self.