

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

KI TISA/PARAH

MARCH 1-2, 2013

20 ADAR 5773

**DEDICATIONS:** By Stuart Benson in memory of his mother, Rhoda Benson, Rachel Bat Eliyahu z"l. whose yartzheit is today, 19 Adar 2. May her Neshama have an Aliyah

**SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH SCHEDULE**  
Candle Lighting - 5:28pm / Mincha / Kabbalat Shabbat - 5:30pm

*Shacharit Shabbat Morning - 9:00am Shabbat Parah ( latest Shemah 8:37 at home)*  
*According to some Poskim, the reading of Parashat Parah is a Torah obligation as was Zachor. Since the Halacha is well-known that "Mitzvot require intention", one must take care while listening to have in mind to fulfill the Torah obligation.*

No kiddush sponsor this week. Please sponsor a Kiddush

*Mincha Shabbat Day - 12:20 – Amidah after 12:36pm*  
*Shabbat Ends - 6:29pm – We will return for Arbit 6:50*

Next Saturday night, March 2, 2013, The Sephardic Congregation Of Long Beach will host a talk by Dr. Reeva Simon entitled "Jews and Islam: An Inconsistent Relationship. From the Golden Age to Modern Times." Dr. Simon is a former Associate Director of The Middle East Institute at Columbia University and professor of Middle East history at Columbia and Yeshiva Universities and the author of a number of books on the topic. Dr. Simon's talk will begin at 8pm, with a reception to follow. Suggested donation is \$10.

Daily Services - Shacharit  
Sunday at 8AM - Monday thru Friday - 7:00am SHARP

Class with Rabbi Yenay Monday night at 7PM –

The Sisterhood Team of Ida, Lisa, Tina, Patti and Rebecca would like to thank all of you for supporting our annual dinner...it was the BEST EVER! Congratulations to Lisa Gaon for the outpouring of LOVE and THANKS!

Last year we had a most amazing Pesach in the Synagogue with two of the most extraordinary Seders I've ever attended. Although our family typically goes to Florida each Pesach, we stayed in New York the past two years. This year we really want to spend the holiday with our family so we'll be in Miami.

*We have received a number of inquiries from people who would love to attend a communal Seder again at the Synagogue. Many are still not back to normal at home. To have the Sedarim at the Synagogue, we need a committee of volunteers. Rebecca and Herman have volunteered to chair this. I know Roni and Sam offered to help. We will need help raising funds, doing errands, setting up and cleaning up. Let Rebecca know what you can do. Rabbi Colish will lead the Seder this year and we'll try to teach the kids "the who knows one" in Arabic. WE NEED TO KNOW IF YOU WANT TO JOIN US. WE NEED TO PLAN*

*The cost will be \$75/ adult, \$50/child. All reservations and monies must be in by March 10...NO EXCEPTIONS! Please respond by email to Rebecca at [uft183@yahoo.com](mailto:uft183@yahoo.com) or by calling her at home at 432-5690. If you need a reduced rate or you need to be sponsored, please let Rebecca know. We must stress the need for volunteers. We also need sponsors for those who may need a reduced rate or who cannot pay. We are all obligated to have guests for Pesach – perhaps each family can sponsor, one or two people or an entire family for one or both nights, we wont need to turn anyone away.*

*If you wish to sponsor a family for both nights \$700, one night \$350, a couple for both nights \$300, or person for both nights, \$150 or give any other amount, please let us know. We would like to sponsor 10 families at a cost of \$7000, please reply to this e-mail*

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### Editors Notes

Rabbi Abittan, z'sl would often tell us that when it comes to something good – like a misvah, rush to do it, but when it comes to something bad, one should delay. We often heard about the time he was pulled over for a ticket. He felt that the officer was wrong and he was unjustly targeted. He pled not guilty and asked for a court date. When the date approached, following his own advice, he asked for a delay. As the second date approached, he asked for a second delay. Finally a year after the incident his day in court arrived. The Rabbi appeared and was called by the judge who asked him for a plea. The Rabbi stated his innocence and the judge dismissed the charges. Apparently the officer who ticketed the Rabbi had retired. With no accuser, there was no case.

As a society we often delay what we shouldn't and lack patience when patience is required.

In this week's portion, we are introduced to the story of the Golden Calf with the verse, When the nation saw that Moses was late. And the Torah uses the Term – Ki BOSHEH – which is an usual term to describe late. LeHitboshesh is also to be embarrassed as Adam and Chavah were after they sinned.

The Rabbis teach us that when we stood at Mount Sinai we were as ADAM before the sin. But with the Golden Calf we again fall and are as guilty as Adam after the sin. Where are the similarities?

The Zohar teaches that the sin of Adam was his lack of patience. We read the story of the fruit on the tree, but his real problem begins when he is overwhelmingly attracted to his wife and instead of waiting for Friday night when Hashem would so to say marry them under the Chupah. He jumps the gun and his with his wife before the sun falls. This leads to the snake seeing and wanting what Adam has and while Adam sleeps, plotting to destroy him. In a similar vein the rabbis suggest that had Adam waited

til Shabbat, even the fruit would no longer have been forbidden. The sin of Adam is his lack of patience.

At the mountain the people see that Moses is late in returning. Aaron wants them to wait. The next morning, even before the sun rises they rush, not to do a Misvah but to worship the calf. They show zeal when they should have patience. And what began as a search for a spiritual image possible resembling something they saw as they crossed the sea ends up leading to full blown immorality as the people dance and do more around the calf. Had they waited a few more hours for Moses to return, history would be different.

The Rabbi would tell us that we see this lack of patience and the suffering it brings again and again throughout our history. We think King Saul's downfall comes because he spared Agag the Amalekite King for a day along with the animals, but it appears to come sooner. When he gathers the army to battle against the Philistines shortly after beginning his reign, he is told to wait for Samuel. See chapter 13 of Shemuel Aleph. After 7 days Saul loses patience and offers the sacrifice. Soon after Samuel arrives and says to him. "You have done foolishly; you have not observed the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, for now, the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now, your kingdom shall not continue; the Lord has sought for Himself a man after His heart, and the Lord has appointed him to be a ruler over His people, for you have not kept that which the Lord commanded you." All this because Saul didn't wait a few more hours. If he had, again history would be different.

And one final example. We know the story that Adam was meant to live for 1000 years and he saw a special soul would be born and die without the time to do anything on earth so he gave him 70 years of his life. Thus Adam lives for 930 years and the recipient of his gift lives for 70 years. And who was the recipient? None other than King David who came here to fix Adam's mistake. Remember ADAM is Aleph for Adam, Mem for Moshe and Dalet for David.

But David too messes up with a lack of patience.

We all heard of Bat Sheva and the fact that she was married to Uriah the Hittite. In a time that the Talmud tells us, the Jewish people did not accept converts; Uriah must have converted and became a faithful follower of King David. Rabbi Aderet mentioned that it was David who brought Uriah and Bat Shevah together.

Now when David saw that Bat Shevah was his true soul mate and with him would mother the Mashiach, he knew they were meant to marry. But instead of having patience and waiting for G-d to put the plan in motion in its proper time, he too jumped the gun. When Batsheva gave birth to a son it lived for only seven days in suffering. The baby's life was taken for David's wrong. Again history is rewritten because of a lack of patience.

Look at how little patience we have. If the internet takes 3 seconds to load a page, we get angry. If my email on my phone is 30 seconds behind, it drives me crazy. If the parking lot attendant takes too long to retrieve the car, we can't handle it. And it extends through life to where we need to in many ways play G-d. For example, we all hear about the family who "want to have a Sunday Bris so let's induce on Saturday night". But that soul might not be ready. We say to a pregnant woman BeShaah Tovah – At a good hour – for a reason. We bless someone to find their Basheret in their time. We need to learn to sit back and go with the flow.

Admitting it's difficult, we need to choose between zerizut which translates as "zeal" or "enthusiasm" and patience. So try following Rabbi Abittan's advice, use zeal when running to do the misvah, and in all other cases, try to exercise patience. We too often become experts at fooling ourselves as to what is a Misvah and what we should have patience with. But in the end we know.

And if we can exercise zeal when need and patience when its call for, then perhaps all of our tickets in life will be dismissed and thrown out as well.

Shabbat Shalom  
David Bibi

PS: See attached article from Image on my son Jonah ....

### Perspective by Gutman Locks

There are hundreds of millions of galaxies. Our Solar System is in the Milky Way galaxy. The Milky Way is 100 million light years across. How far is that?

Well, if the sun would be the size of the dot on this i the Milky Way would stretch from New York to Los Angeles. That gives us an idea of how big the Universe is.

But things also get amazingly small. It would take one million atoms lined up to equal the thickness of

one piece of paper. There are more atoms in a single grain of sand than there are grains of sand on the entire beach!

And atoms are no way near the smallest things get. Atoms are made up of electrons that whizz around in a cloud outside a central nucleus. This nucleus is about 100,000 times smaller than the atom. This is like a pinhead in the middle of an athletics stadium.

### Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: This first Aliya concludes the details of the Mishkan's construction. The Bnai Yisroel are commanded to give the half Shekel toward a national census and the purchasing of the public offerings. The copper washstand, the Kiyor, is described along with the ingredients and laws of the anointing oil and the Ketores - the incense. Betzallel, the grandson of Chur and great-grandson of Miriam, is identified as the chief artisan and architect of the Mishkan. (Note: he was only 13 yr. old!) The Mitzvah of Shabbos is commanded. Its juxtaposition to the details of the Mishkan provides the Gemara with the source for determining the 39 categories of Melacha prohibited on Shabbos.

2nd Aliya: The story of the Golden Calf is told. Moshe ascended Sinai on the morning of Sivan 7, and remained 40 days and nights. The 7th didn't start with a night, so it wasn't included in the total of 40. The Jews mistakenly assumed that it was to be included and expected Moshe back on the morning of Tamuz 16. Instead, he returned the morning of Tamuz 17. By midday of the 16th, the Jews were already desperate. Chur attempts to reason with them and is killed. They approach Aharon who attempts to redirect their terror which results in the Golden Calf. Moshe appears the next morning, breaks the Luchos, marshals the tribe of Levi, and 3000 people are killed. Moshe demands Hashem's forgiveness for the people, but moves the Ohel Moed out from the midst of the camp. Yehoshua is proclaimed the main student of Moshe.

3rd & 4th Aliyot: Moshe requests to understand Hashem's system of justice. He is granted a greater understanding of Hashem than any other person in history, but is denied the ability to comprehend divine justice.

5th Aliya: Moshe is instructed to cut two new Luchos and ascend Sinai. Moshe is taught the secret formula for Teshuva (the Thirteen Names of G-d as He Manifests His Mercy) (34:6) and G-d forgives the Bnai Yisroel.

6th Aliya: Hashem establishes a new covenant with the people. He forewarns them against the influences of assimilation and intermarriage and forbids them to make any treaties with the inhabitants of Canaan. The holidays of Pesach, Shevout, and Succos are reviewed, as well as Shabbos and the basic law of Kashrus.

7th Aliya: Moshe remains on Sinai another 40 days and nights and returns on Yom Kippur carrying the second Luchos. The people see that the very being of Moshe had been transformed and that his face radiated with a inner light. Moshe fashions for himself a veil that he would wear at all times, except when receiving a prophecy and when transmitting the word of G-d to the people.

On Parshas Parah, we read the section found in the beginning of Parshas Chukas known as Parah. This section discusses the necessary steps that had to be followed to remove the impurity which caused by having had contact with a dead person. This process involved a seven day period during which the impure - Tameh person underwent a process involving the ashes of the Red Heifer. The process was facilitated by a Kohen, and had to take place in Yerushalayim.

The status of being Tameh restricted a person from entering into the Temple compound and / or participating in certain select activities. Although these restrictions are less applicable today because we do not have the Bais Hamikdash; nevertheless, it is incumbent upon all people, male and female, to keep these laws to the degree that they do apply.

In the time of the Bais Hamikdash it was required of every male adult to visit the Bais Hamikdash and offer a sacrifice a minimum of three times a year: Pesach, Shevout, and Succoth. However, it was even more important to be there on Erev Pesach to sacrifice the Korban Pesach - Pascal Lamb. Anyone who happened to be Tameh, from having had contact with a dead body, would have to undergo the process of the Parah Adumah - the Red Heifer, to remove the status of Tameh and be allowed to bring his Pascal Lamb to the Bais Hamikdash.

The Talmud tells us that the furthest point in Israel from Yerushalayim was a two weeks travel. If so, a person who was Tameh living two weeks travel away would require a minimum of three weeks to arrive in Yerushalayim with sufficient time to go through the one week process of the Red Heifer and be able to offer his Korban Pesach. Therefore, Chazal ordained the reading of Parah on the week before the reading of Chodesh as a public reminder to those who are Tameh that they must immediately arrange to get to

Yerushalayim so that they can purify themselves in time to bring the Korban Pesach.

Central to the theme of the Haftorah is the fact that Hashem ultimately redeems the nation, "for His own sake." While in exile the Jews are able to spread the word of G-d and teach His existence to the other nations. However, exile will also take its toll on the Jews. The Jews interaction with other nations will result in furthering the very defection which caused G-d to first punish the nation.

Among the mysteries of the Parah Adumah is the fact that the Kohen who administers the ashes becomes impure while the recipient of the ashes becomes pure. In essence this is the experience of the Jew in exile. The Jews have brought knowledge and understanding of G-d to the nations wherein which they were exiled, while at the same time suffering terrible persecution and assimilation through their association with the non-Jewish world. The nations have become pure while the Jews have become impure.

In the end G-d will redeem the nation and gather them in from the four- corners of the earth, "for His own sake." The time will come when the purpose of the Jew in exile will have been fulfilled. Then, there will be no further reason for the Jew to remain among the other nations and G-d will renew His covenant with the Bnai Yisroel and return them to Eretz Yisroel.

#### **EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN**

"The Children of Israel shall keep the Shabbat, to observe the Shabbat throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant." (Shemot 31:16)

This famous pasuk of the Torah is recited every Shabbat in all Jewish homes when Kidush is said. It is truly a beautiful statement. However, there is a redundancy in the pasuk. Why does it say, "the Shabbat" twice? It could have said, "And Israel shall keep and observe the Shabbat." Our Sages tell us that there is a hidden promise here in the Torah. The Torah is telling us that if a person observes the Shabbat completely for two times, then it will be kept by him and his family for generations to come, as it says, "okug ,hrc o,urusk, for generations to come."

This is based on the Talmud in Tractate Yoma, "If for two times a sin comes to the person's hand and he doesn't sin, he will not sin after that." This is a promise from Hashem that he will help that person not to sin. This fact is hinted to in our pasuk.

There is a well known statement of our Sages that if a person comes home Friday night from shul and finds the candles lit, the table set and the house in order, the good angel that accompanies him says, "May it be the will of Hashem that the next Shabbat should be the same." Why doesn't he say that it should be this way every Shabbat? Because, if the next Shabbat is this way, then the Shabbat will be observed always.

This idea, said by Rabbi Rephael from Hamburg, gives us great encouragement and hope. Hashem wants to help us observe his misvot for our own benefit. All that is needed is some effort by us. The observance of the entire Torah is within our reach. All we have to do is reach out for it. Rabbi Reuven Semah

**The Gemara tells us that the Evil Inclination** (Yeser Hara) works in a slow, methodical manner. First he tells a person to transgress something minor. When the person violated that minor transgression and got over it, the "Yeser hara" tries a more substantial act until ultimately, the person can be convinced to worship idols.

Here in the perashah, we see an exception to this rule. The Jewish people had accepted the Torah on Mount Sinai just 40 days ago and now they were dancing around a Golden Calf. How could they fall so quickly to do such a grave transgression? R' Hayim Shmuelevitz Z"l says that the Yeser Hara has to work slowly only when a person is in good spirits. If a person is depressed, however, then the Evil Inclination can get him to do the worst sin in the slightest amount of time. Here, the Jewish people thought that Moshe Rabenu had died, and got into a deep depression. Therefore, they were able to commit an act of idol worship without going through the slow process of deterioration.

We must always be vigilant of this principle and try our best to stay in good spirits. When things start getting us down, we should do whatever we can to bounce back into our regular self either by talking to others, listening to the right music or going places that will bring us more happiness. By maintaining our spirits properly, we can have both our physical and spiritual health in the best shape possible. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

## **MIND-BODY BALANCE**

Powerful desires were instilled in the human being in order to perpetuate the species. Hunger drives a person to eat, and food provides the nutrients needed to fuel the body. The strong attraction to the opposite gender promotes behavior

that yields offspring. Even the desire to accumulate wealth – greed – was created so that people would compete and create products and services to improve the human condition.

Heavenly wisdom also provided brakes to limit the speed of the human engine – in the form of intellect. Human intellect can rule over desire and emotion. Common sense, or sometimes deep analysis, can cause a person to pause and think: "Is this really what is best?" – thus averting major errors that can be committed by submitting to an inappropriate desire.

Recently, while driving through a business district in heavy traffic, I passed the time by reading the various signs and awnings that advertised each establishment's wares. One caught my eye. "Mind-Body Balance Spa" was the name over the door of an unassuming storefront. I did not stop and I did not get a chance to enter and investigate what, exactly, goes on in that place, but it did start my mind buzzing. Isn't that what life is all about? Life's mission is to find the right balance between desire and intellect – to balance the wants and needs of the body with the high ideals of the Heavenly soul.

Just as automobiles are designed with adequate brakes, so, too, people are provided with good sense. And just as drivers who do not choose to step on the brake pedal will head into a crash, so, too, individuals who do not use their brains will end up in trouble. Human judgment is fallible and mistakes do occur, but the biggest mistake of all is not to use the tools given to us to control the course of our lives.

Use of the mind to control the body is the road to achievement of the elusive goal. Mind-body balance is the path to happiness. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR**  
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It's Not Personal

Parashat Ki-Tisa tells the story of Het Ha'egel, the sin of the golden calf, in response to which G-d decided to kill Beneh Yisrael and begin a new nation through Moshe Rabbenu. He informed Moshe of His decision, and assured him that his "job" was safe, as a new nation would emerge from his progeny. Moshe, however, selflessly refused the offer. Devoted unconditionally to the people under his charge, he intervened to save them, praying to G-d to annul His decree. In the end, of course, G-d accepted His

prayer, and decided against Beneh Yisrael's annihilation.

Moshe's devotion to the people comes into sharper focus when we consider the background to the story of the golden calf. What caused the people to fall so drastically from the level they achieved at the time of Matan Torah, and construct a graven image? Hazal explain that when Moshe did not return from the top of Mount Sinai when the people thought he would, the Satan seized the opportunity to cause them to sin. He made the world appear dark and showed them an image of Moshe lying dead in a coffin. This caused the people to become terribly depressed and anxious, and this allowed them to deteriorate to the point where they constructed a golden calf.

In short, the people made and worshipped the golden calf thinking that Moshe Rabbenu had died. And yet, the Torah tells that on the day they committed this sin, "Va'yakumu Le'sahek" – "They arose to make merry." The worship was accompanied by frivolous merriment and festivity. There was song, dance, and all manner of exuberant celebration. Moshe had every reason to feel terribly offended by the people's jubilation. After all he had done for them, leading them out of Egypt and through the sea, caring for them like a faithful shepherd and bringing them the Torah, here they were celebrating what they thought was his death. No mourning, no grief, no eulogies – only celebration and festivity!

But this did not bother Moshe or affect his commitment to the people one iota. He understood that this is not personal. Moshe did not say to himself, "What an ungrateful people!" Rather, he thought, "It's not their fault. They're frail, they were only recently freed from generations of harsh slavery. This is not about me." And therefore he did not give up on them or reject them. He pleaded courageously and passionately on their behalf, effectively saving them from annihilation.

This is a true model of greatness. Moshe here shows us the ability to separate his personal feelings from the people's needs. His mind was focused not on his ego, on the respect and consideration owed to him, but rather on what was best for the people. And this is why he interceded on their behalf despite having been scorned by them. He rose above the concern for his ego and concerned himself solely with the needs of Beneh Yisrael. And Moshe thereby sets an inspiring example for us of responsible and selfless leadership, tending to the needs of the people around us without any concern for personal honor and prestige.

## Rabbi Wein

Moshe is absent from the people of Israel for forty days. This seems to trigger a disastrous turn of events that results in the incident of the Golden Calf. Why is Moshe's absence such a cataclysmic event in the evolving story of the constant and continuing backtracking of Israel from its Sinai commitment? After all, every rabbi is entitled to a vacation away from his flock.

The commentators to Torah over the centuries have long debated the issue of the absence of Moshe and its connection to the sin of the Golden Calf. Many saw it as a sign of immaturity on the part of the people, in thinking that Moshe was their security blanket and that they could not serve God without his help and intervention. Others interpreted Moshe's absence as a separation trauma in which Israel believed that Moshe, after being in Heaven once already, so to speak, could not readjust to earthly existence and would perhaps never return.

This would have signaled to the people that Torah and God's commandments were heavenly, other-world issues that could have no daily relevance to their mortal existence upon earth. This is an idea that the Torah itself has to constantly counteract – that the Torah is not in Heaven and it is not for Heaven. It is for humans and intended to direct us in our earthly existence. The rabbis taught us in the Talmud that the Torah was not given to celestial angels. It was given to fragile, vulnerable, sinful human beings.

Moshe is not blamed for his absence. After all, he followed God's commandment to remain on the summit of Mount Sinai after the granting of the Torah to Israel. He certainly cannot be faulted for obeying the commands of the Lord. Yet his absence seems to be a contributing factor in the grievous sin of the Golden Calf.

I think that Moshe's absence, which after all was occasioned by a command from God, was not really the main problem that troubled the Jewish people. Rather, it was the choice of Aharon and Chur to replace him that proved troubling, as events later proved. Chur was too strong a person and, in his confrontation with the people, was killed. Aharon was too accommodating and compassionate a person and in his goodness and identification with the people and their demands he contributed to the sin of the Golden Calf.

Moshe was the perfect blend of strength and compassion. The rabbis criticized King Saul for being too strong on one occasion and too weak and

compromising in another situation. A leader must encompass within one's personality both strength and compassion, firmness and the ability to compromise. The greatness of a leader is determined by the ability to be firm when necessary and accommodating when that occasion arises.

Moshe was and is the prime example of such leadership qualities. He fights a civil war against the architects of the Golden Calf and at the same time pleads the case for forgiveness of the Jewish people from God. It is the absence of such a perfectly balanced personality, which can destroy the leader of a people.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks**  
**Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations**  
**of the Commonwealth**

Framing the epic events of this week's sedra are two objects - the two sets of tablets, the first given before, the second after, the sin of the Golden Calf. Of the first, we read:

"The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of G-d, engraved on the tablets."

These were perhaps the holiest object in history: from beginning to end, the work of G-d. Yet within hours they lay shattered, broken by Moses when he saw the calf and the Israelites dancing around it.

The second tablets, brought down by Moses on the tenth of Tishri, were the result of his prolonged plea to G-d to forgive the people. This is the historic event that lies behind Yom Kippur (tenth of Tishri), the day marked in perpetuity as a time of favour, forgiveness and reconciliation between G-d and the Jewish people. The second tablets were different in one respect. They were not wholly the work of G-d:

Carve out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.

Hence the paradox: the first tablets, made by G-d, did not remain intact. The second tablets, the joint work of G-d and Moses, did. Surely the opposite should have been true: the greater the holiness, the more eternal. Why was the more holy object broken while the less holy stayed whole? This is not, as it might seem, a question specific to the tablets. It is, in fact, a powerful example of a fundamental principle in Jewish spirituality.

The Jewish mystics distinguished between two types of Divine-human encounter. They called them itaruta de-l'eylah and itaruta deletata, respectively "an awakening from above" and "an awakening from below." The first is initiated by G-d, the second by mankind. An "awakening from above" is spectacular, supernatural, an event that bursts through the chains of causality that at other times bind the natural world. An "awakening from below" has no such grandeur. It is a gesture that is human, all too human.

Yet there is another difference between them, in the opposite direction. An "awakening from above" may change nature, but it does not, in and of itself, change human nature. In it, no human effort has been expended. Those to whom it happens are passive. While it lasts, it is overwhelming; but only while it lasts. Thereafter, people revert to what they were. An "awakening from below", by contrast, leaves a permanent mark.

Because human beings have taken the initiative, something in them changes. Their horizons of possibility have been expanded. They now know they are capable of great things, and because they did so once, they are aware that they can do so again. An awakening from above temporarily transforms the external world; an awakening from below permanently transforms our internal world. The first changes the universe; the second changes us.

Two Examples. The first: Before and after the division of the Red Sea, the Israelites were confronted by enemies: before, by the Egyptians, after by the Amalekites. The difference is total.

Before the Red Sea, the Israelites were commanded to do nothing:

"Stand still and you will see the deliverance G-d will bring you today . . . G-d will fight for you; you need only be still." (14:13-14).

Facing the Amalekites, however, the Israelites themselves had to fight:

"Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose men and go out and fight the Amalekites' (17:9).

The first was an "awakening from above", the second an "awakening from below."

The difference was palpable. Within three days after the division of the Sea, the greatest of all miracles, the Israelites began complaining again (no water, no food). But after the war against the Amalekites, the Israelites never again complained when facing

conflict (the sole exception - when the spies returned and the people lost heart - was when they relied on hearsay testimony, not on the immediate prospect of battle itself). The battles fought for us do not change us; the battles we fight, do.

The second example: Mount Sinai and the Tabernacle. The Torah speaks about these two revelations of "G-d's glory" in almost identical terms:

The glory of G-d settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day G-d called to Moses from within the cloud. Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of G-d filled the tabernacle.

The difference between them was that the sanctity of Mount Sinai was momentary, while that of the tabernacle was permanent (at least, until the Temple was built, centuries later). The revelation at Sinai was an "awakening from above". It was initiated by G-d. So overwhelming was it that the people said to Moses, "Let G-d not speak to us any more, for if He does, we will die" (20:16). By contrast, the tabernacle involved human labour. The Israelites made it; they prepared the structured space the Divine presence would eventually fill. Forty days after the revelation at Sinai, the Israelites made a Golden Calf. But after constructing the sanctuary they made no more idols - at least until they entered the land. That is the difference between the things that are done for us and the things we have a share in doing ourselves. The former change us for a moment, the latter for a lifetime.

There was one other difference between the first tablets and the second. According to tradition, when Moses was given the first tablets, he was given only Torah shebikhtav, the "written Torah". At the time of the second tablets, he was given Torah she-be'al peh, the Oral Torah as well: "R. Jochanan said: G-d made a covenant with Israel only for the sake of the Oral Law, as it says : "For by the mouth of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel"" (Ex. 34:27).

The difference between the Written and Oral Torah is profound. The first is the word of G-d, with no human contribution. The second is a partnership - the word of G-d as interpreted by the mind of man. The following are two of several remarkable passages to this effect:

R. Judah said in the name of Shmuel: Three thousand traditional laws were forgotten during the period of mourning for Moses. They said to Joshua: "Ask" (through ruach hakodesh, the holy spirit).

Joshua replied, "It is not in heaven." They said to Samuel, "Ask." He replied, "These are the commandments - implying that no prophet has the right to introduce anything new." (B.T. Temurah 16a) "If a thousand prophets of the stature of Elijah and Elisha were to give one interpretation of a verse, and one thousand and one sages were to offer a different interpretation, we follow the majority: the law is in accordance with the thousand-and-one sages and not in accordance with the thousand prophets." (Maimonides, Commentary to the Mishneh, Introduction)

Any attempt to reduce the Oral Torah to the Written - by relying on prophecy or Divine communication - mistakes its essential nature as the collaborative partnership between G-d and man, where revelation meets interpretation. Thus, the difference between the two precisely mirrors that between the first and second tablets. The first were Divine, the second the result of Divine-human collaboration. This helps us understand a glorious ambiguity. The Torah says that at Sinai the Israelites heard a "great voice velo yasaf" (Deut. 5:18). Two contradictory interpretations are given of this phrase. One reads it as "a great voice that was never heard again", the other as "a great voice that did not cease" - i.e. a voice that was always heard again. Both are true. The first refers to the Written Torah, given once and never to be repeated. The second applies to the Oral Torah, whose study has never ceased.

It also helps us understand why it was only after the second tablets, not the first, that "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of Testimony in his hands, he was unaware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with G-d" (34:29). Receiving the first tablets, Moses was passive. Therefore, nothing in him changed. For the second, he was active. He had a share in the making. He carved the stone on which the words were to be engraved. That is why he became a different person. His face shone.

In Judaism, the natural is greater than the supernatural in the sense that an "awakening from below" is more powerful in transforming us, and longer-lasting in its effects, than is an "awakening from above." That was why the second tablets survived intact while the first did not. Divine intervention changes nature, but it is human initiative - our approach to G-d - that changes us.