

there all along. Fifty years ago I saw nothing, but now..."

Life doesn't always allow for philosophies, no matter how profound, inspiring or poignant. You have to just do it and figure it out later. Between challenge and response is a void, and filling it with faith means filling it with fulfilling the Torah.

Having lost everyone Reb Shimon came to a foreign country, married and had a family and community. He had no satisfying answers to why. He still doesn't. Except one. His grandson made a *Seder* in Kobe. For 150 people!

PS: In case you haven't worked it out, the man in the story is Rabbi Goldman's late father obm.

Live & Laugh

In a trial in the heart of the American South, a prosecuting attorney called his first witness, a grandmotherly woman he had known since childhood, to the stand. He approached her and asked, "Mrs. Whitaker, do you know me?"

She responded, "Why, yes, I do know you, Mr. Coolidge. I've known you since you were a young boy, and frankly, you've been a big disappointment to me. You lie, cheat, you manipulate people and talk about them behind their backs. You think you're a big shot when you haven't the brains to realize you never will amount to anything more than a two-bit lawyer. Yes, I know you."

The lawyer was stunned! Not knowing what else to do, he pointed across the room and asked, "Mrs. Whitaker, do you know the defense attorney?" She again replied, "Of course, I do. I've known Mr. Johnson since he was a youngster, too. He's lazy, bigoted, and he has a drinking problem. He can't build a normal relationship with anyone and his law practice is one of the worst in the entire state. Yes, I know him."

The defense attorney turned red with embarrassment.

The judge upon hearing the questions and answers thus far asked both counselors to approach the bench. In a very quiet voice he said, "If either of you asks her if she knows me, I'll throw you in jail for contempt."

What's Nu?!

The Barmy Boy
Dylan Goldsmith

Mazal Tov to Brett & Belinda Goldsmith and to grandparents Syd & Rhona Scheftz and Bernard Goldsmith.

Calendar

- ◆ Shacharis: 8:30 am; Shtibl: 8:45 am
- ◆ Brocha across the street.
- ◆ **Smorgasbord of Shiurim.**
- ◆ Mincha: 6:00 pm
- ◆ Shabbos ends: 7:08 pm

GREAT DEBATES
in JEWISH HISTORY

Starts Monday
26 February 2018

SUICIDE AT MASADA
Fight to the death or live another day? Were they martyrs or madmen?

MAIMONIDES
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SANHEDRIN
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TIME: 7:45pm
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BOOK: 011 640 5021 or online: www.yeshul.co.za
COST: R350 per person
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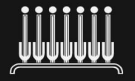
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Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!

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3 Mar 2018 Parshas Ki Sisa 16 Adar 5778

Picking Up the Pieces

by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

It's too late. I'm too far gone. It'll never be the same. How many times have we heard those words? Or, worse still, said them?

This week's Parsha tells the story of the Golden Calf, the worst national sin in the history of the Jewish people. Now, frankly, if I were the editor of the Bible I'd have left that part out. How humiliating to the Jews! Just weeks after the greatest revelation of all time, when they saw and heard G-d up front and personal, they go and bow down to a cow?! How fickle can you get? But the Torah is unflinchingly honest and records this most unflattering moment of ours in all its gory detail.

Why?

Perhaps the very important lessons we need to draw from this embarrassing episode are, firstly, that people do sin, human beings do make mistakes, and even inspired Jews who saw the divine can mess up - badly. And, secondly, that even afterwards there is still hope, no matter what.

In the very same Parsha we read how G-d tells Moshe to carve out a second set of tablets to replace the first set he smashed when he came down the mountain and was shocked by what the Jews had gotten up to. Sort of "You broke them, you fix them." Like the guy who fell asleep during the Rabbi's sermon and the Rabbi tells the Shamash to go and wake the fellow up. The Shamash says, "Rabbi, you put him to sleep, you wake him up!" The Torah does not intend to diminish

our respect for that generation, but rather to help us understand human frailty, our moral weakness and the reality of relationships, spiritual or otherwise.

G-d gave us a perfect Torah. The tablets were hand-made by G-d, pure and sacred, and then we messed up. So, is it all over? Is there really no hope now? Are we beyond redemption? After all, what could possibly be worse than idolatry? We broke the first two commandments and the tablets were shattered into smithereens because we were no longer worthy to have them. It was the ultimate infidelity.

So Torah teaches that all is not lost. As bad as it was - and it was bad - it is possible for man to repair the damage. Moshe will make new tablets. They won't be quite the same as G-d's, but there will be Tablets nonetheless. We can pick up the pieces of life. Hope springs eternal.

I once heard a good *vort* from a colleague about the significance of breaking the glass under the Chupah. Besides never forgetting Jerusalem and praying for her full restoration, this ceremony teaches a very important lesson about life to a bride and groom who are about to embark on their own new path in life. What happens immediately after the groom breaks the glass? Everyone shouts Mazel Tov! The message is clear. Something broke? *Nu*, it's not the end of the world. We can even laugh about it and still be happy. *Nisht gefערlich. Lo nora.* This too shall pass. A very practical, peace-keeping tip for the new couple.

There are most definitely second chances in life. Here at Sydenham Shul we run many *Shiurim* and

our adult education programme called CAJE, the College of Adult Jewish Education, has the by-line *Your Second Chance to Know*. There are second chances, and third chances too. Many Cheder dropouts have passed through our classes and, as adults, learned to read Hebrew from scratch. Today, some of our graduates can even lead the Shul Service and I am very proud of them and our programme.

It is possible to pick up the pieces in life. Whether it's our relationships with G-d, our marriage partners, our kids, our friends or our colleagues, we can make amends and repair the damage. Falling off a horse or a bicycle dare not mean that we never ride again.

If the Jews could recover from the Golden Calf, our own challenges are small indeed.

Parsha Pointers

*Ki Sisa: Artscroll Chumash pg 484;
Living Torah pg 441*

The people of Israel are told to each contribute exactly half a shekel of silver to the Sanctuary. Instructions are also given regarding the making of the Sanctuary's water basin, anointing oil and incense. "Wise-hearted" artisans Betzalel and Ahaliav are placed in charge of the Sanctuary's construction, and the people are once again commanded to keep the Shabbat.

When Moses does not return when expected from Mount Sinai, the people make a Golden Calf and worship it. G-d proposes to destroy the errant nation, but Moses intercedes on their behalf. Moses descends from the mountain carrying the Tablets of the Testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; seeing the people dancing about their idol, he breaks the Tablets, destroys the Golden Calf and has the primary culprits put to death. He then returns to G-d to say: "If You do not forgive them, blot me out from the book that You have written."

G-d forgives, but says that the effect of their sin will be felt for many generations. At first G-d proposes to send His angel along with them, but Moses insists that G-d Himself accompany His people to the Promised Land.

Moses prepares a new set of tablets and once

more ascends the mountain, where G-d reinscribes the covenant on these Second Tablets. On the mountain Moses is also granted a vision of the divine Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. So radiant is Moses' face upon his return, that he must cover it with a veil, which he removes only to speak with G-d and to teach His laws to the people.

The Newlyweds

By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

It was inevitable.

Yes, I know you invested so much in this relationship. I know you spent the last two years planning the wedding and the honeymoon. And yet I still think it was inevitable. Sooner or later, you would offend her deeply.

Think about it. You are different people, with different backgrounds, experiences and expectations. In fact, your differences are what attracted you to each other in the first place. No surprise, then, that after the excitement of the wedding, when you got back to real life, you fell back into your old habits and shattered her heart.

What should you do now, you ask? Should you buy her chocolates or roses, or take her out to dinner? Well, pay attention. Try everything you can think of, but keep paying attention.

For if she loves you, she will let you know what to do.

After the pain subsides, if you listen carefully, she will show you just how you should console her. And how she wants you to demonstrate that you care about her, that you cherish the relationship and that you are determined to rebuild the connection.

Listen carefully and you will hear.

And that is exactly what happened in the most dramatic story of newlywed betrayal. Just forty days after the most monumental wedding in history—the wedding between G-d and the Jewish people at Sinai—the bride betrayed the groom. The people served the Golden Calf, striking the heart

of their Beloved.

The Jews were sure that the relationship was doomed.

And yet, somehow, it survived.

The relationship survived, and not only because of the story you heard in Hebrew school, about Moses threatening G-d, telling Him to forgive the people, "and if not, erase me from Your book which You have written."

It survived because of the lesser-known continuation of the story, in which Moses asked G-d, "Show me Your glory." Moses asked G-d to show them what they could do to restore the relationship.

G-d agreed. And, in what may be one of the most convoluted verses in all of the Torah, G-d said, "You will see My back, but My face will not be seen."

The rabbis, aware that this verse captures a deep mystical truth, explain that G-d wrapped Himself in a *tallit* and *tefillin*, then turned His back to Moses and showed him "the knot of the head-*tefillin*."

Moses listened.

He listened, and learned how the Jews can save their marriage with G-d. He listened as G-d showed him the ingredients needed to recreate the love.

The *tallit* and *tefillin* serve as reminders. The Torah states regarding the *tallit*: "This shall be fringes for you, and when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the L-rd." And regarding the *tefillin* it is written: "It shall be to you as a sign upon your hand and as a remembrance between your eyes."

G-d was teaching Moses that for our relationship to thrive, we must "wear the *tallit*." We must show Him that we "remember," that we are constantly mindful of how important this relationship is to us. To survive emotional betrayal, our Beloved must have no doubt that we constantly cherish our relationship with Him, more than anything else. More than our hobbies and more than our careers.

"Remembering," however, can be too abstract. And that's why we also need the "knot of the *tefillin*." The knot represents our actions,

which connect us to G-d. And like a rope that was torn, we need to tie a double knot. We need to demonstrate that because the relationship is now at the forefront of our mind, we are prepared to double the actions that bind us to Him.

So put on your metaphorical *tallit* and *tefillin*. Show Him that you remember. Tie the double knot. You'll discover that the bond is deeper than ever.

Kobe, Brooklyn and Egypt

By Rabbi Shimon Posner

"My grandson made a Pesach *Seder* in Kobe!" "150 people!" "In Kobe Japan!" "My grandson!" I was on a trip back to Brooklyn several summers ago, and had met up with one of the elders of the Crown Heights community. A butcher by trade. Polish born. He had stopped me in the middle of 770; after a hurried hello started gushing about his grandson's Pesach, some three months before.

I didn't get the excitement. I understand a grandfather's *nachas*. I find it amazing there were 150 Jews in Kobe and am impressed by near teenagers who spend their time off from yeshiva finding them. But...Chabad has been doing that for decades. This man's son is one of South Africa's most popular rabbis. I smiled as convincingly as I could, a smile that I hoped said very nice.

He grabbed me by the lapel of my jacket. "You don't understand! I was there. During the war!" said the *Shangchaier*. The *Shangchaier* refers to the yeshiva bochurim from Poland to whom a Japanese diplomat named Sugihara had given visas. They had escaped Hitler by stealing train rides and running to the east. They had spent time in Kobe before a deportation to Shanghai.

In Reb Shimon's living room wall are dozens of family pictures. Formal wedding and bar mitzvah portraits of his kids and grandkids. Looking at the pictures you can see the subtle changes in Hassidic fashion over the decades in America. There is one incongruous black-and-white of a young man and woman standing outside a run-down building. They both have on bands with the Jewish star. "It's my sister Chana on her wedding day," he had told me years before, "In the Warsaw Ghetto. This picture is all I have of my family."

Sydenham Shul 24 Main Street, Rouxville, 2192.

Telephone: 640-5021, Fax: 485-2810

E-mail: sydshul@sydshul.co.za

Website: www.sydshul.co.za

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