

DAILY TIKUN FOR THE AIGEL

Parshas Aikev

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

A most intriguing statement in the Daf Yomi this week (Brochos 7a), coinciding with the Parsha of this week, solicits clarification. It is about the tragic blunder of the golden calf. This dreadful transgression caused “unbearable” divine anger, not easily forgiven. Moshe, the loyal all-time protector of Israel, seeks desperately to intercede on behalf of their survival’s sake. Says Shmuel (Brochos 32a) “Vayechal Moshe” Moshe pleaded before Hashem (Shemos 32:11), this teaches that Moshe risked his life for their sake, as he stated “And now do forgive them, but if not, erase me now from Your book that You have written” (32:32). “Vayechal” from “Cholol” (Rashi), as in “m’dam cholol”, blood of corpse (Devorim 32:42).

Hashem’s response is puzzling: Hashem relented from His intention against His people and replace it with Moshe. Forgiveness, however, was not immediately granted, “My anger will be eased, then you will get Menucha” (33:14, according to Targum Yonoson) “Wait until my countenance of anger passes, then I shall give you rest” (Brochos 7a).

How perplexing: we learn in this week’s Pirkei Avoth (5:14) “He whom it is hard to anger and easy to pacify, is a chosid”. How can one fathom the Ribono Shel Olom Himself being “hard to pacify”!?

Hashem even this should not be so hard to pacify. When Cain killed his brother Hevel (Beraishis 4:8) he acknowledged the gravity of his crime, yet he pleaded “for Hashem is this iniquity too great to be borne?” (ibid. 4:13).

One wishes to suggest, that in addition to the very sin of idol worship, the case of the golden calf was intolerable because “SARU MAHAIR” They have strayed QUICKLY from the way that I have commanded them” (Shmos 32:8, and again in Parshas Aikev 9:12). The sin was more repugnant because it was committed so soon following the experience of Sinai and accepting the ONOCHI of the Ten Commandments.

The Talmud (Shabos 88b) compares the sudden speedy downfall while still at Sinai to the shameful bride running off with a stranger while still in the “bridal chamber”. How brazen is the bride who is unfaithful while still at the chupa”.

Moshe is also requested to speed his descent from the mount. Hashem spoke to Moshe “go descend, for your people has become corrupt” (Shemos 32:7). In Parshas Aikev we read Hashem commanding Moshe “Descend ‘Quickly’ (MAHAIR) from here...” The speed seems a central point, just as the speedy turning away from Hashem is a central point.

This may allow comprehension to the lack of speed in granting forgiveness, measure for measure. The Chosid indeed is hard to become angry and fast to forgive, as quoted above. But to undo and recant the SPEEDY transgression of the idol worship requires slowing down, tarrying the official coveted word “SOLACHTI” (I have forgiven). That auspicious moment, stating clearly and unequivocally “SOLACHTI”, came forty days later, Rosh Chodesh Elul. A great Torah scholar once said that when we quote the statement SOLACHTI on Yom Kippur eve, following Kol Nidrai the Birchas “SHECHEYONU” which follows in honor of the arrival of Yom Kippur may also include a Shecheyonu on the attainment of the Solachti.

The Mitzvoths of the Torah observed on certain days has the leniency of the complete day for the observance. The Mishna (Megila 20b) mentions twenty-one special mitzvohs with no hour limit for its observance. There is only one exception, which is the Mitzva to read the Shema. This observance, the declaration of Hashem Echod, acceptance of the yoke of Heaven, is limited to the earlier hours of the day, no later than three hours following sunrise. The reason, one conjectures, is that this declaration is a TIKUN rectification for the sin of the idol worship, the Aigel. “Hashem Echod”. In order to rectify, likewise, the speed SORU MAHAIR, we recite the Shema in the earlier hours of the day.

