

Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from
the famed Maggid of Dubno
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

A Suitable Leader

KI TISA

While Moshe was on Mount Sinai, the people below made a golden calf, and worshiped the idol with dancing and offerings. God commanded Moshe, LEICH REID - "Go down!"

The Midrash however explains that God told Moshe, "Go subdue them" - the people need to be subjugated (MARDUT).

According to the Midrash, the word REID, REISH-DALET comes from the root R'DA (to control or subjugate), and not from YARAD (to descend). Why not explain the verse according to its simple meaning?

A Suitable Tutor

When parents are looking for a private tutor to teach their child, they should inquire after an instructor suitable for the child's talents and attitude.

If the child is well-behaved, studious and hard-working, then he needs a tutor who is knowledgeable and kindhearted. Such a teacher will challenge the child intellectually and also encourage him to succeed.

If, however, the child does not apply himself, and looks for any opportunity to escape and play outside, then his tutor must be a firm and experienced disciplinarian. Such a child requires a teacher who will be able to control him, to keep him in line.

Usually these two traits - brilliance and discipline - are not found together in the same individual. The parents must decide which type of tutor is the best fit for their child.

A Leader for Israel

When the Jewish people were on a high level - when they wholeheartedly promised at Sinai, "We will do all that God has spoken" - at that point in time, Moshe was the most suitable leader for them. As the Midrash says, "Let good [i.e., Moshe] come, and get good [the Torah] from Good [God] for the good ones [Israel]." In other words, Moshe was most suitable to be the teacher of such students, students with a natural love of learning and love for Torah.

However, when the Jewish people later sinned and made the golden calf, God told Moshe, "Go down."

God was informing Moshe: I no longer require your services. What I need is a disciplinarian. The Jewish people need MARDUT. You are no longer qualified for the job of leading Israel; they need a firm and strong leader.

Adapted from Mishlei Yaakov, pp. 168-169