

Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



KI TISA (reprint from 2020)

Not Again!

While my kids were growing up, for reasons not quite clear to me, they would often roll their eyes, and say, 'Not again!' when I would tell one of my wonderful stories. Within minutes I'd be rolling with laughter while they would stare with various levels of forbearance or pity. I guess the concept of appropriate review of fabulous anecdotes was lost on my children who studied Torah, and God never repeats. Well, hardly ever. In this week's Torah reading we have one of God's favorite repetition's.

Parshat Ki Tisa is most famous, of course, for the incident of the Eigel HaZahav (Golden Calf). In this article, I'd like to skip all the debate about who sinned as well as the nature and severity of the sin. Much more interesting to me, this year, is the aftermath of that disaster. Moshe Rabbeinu pleads with God to forgive the wayward nation. God not only accedes to this request, but gives the Jews the formula for forgiveness, forever: The Thirteen Attribute of God's Compassion.

Right after that breathtaking scene we have warnings about AVODA ZARA (idol worship) in their new

home, Eretz Yisrael. Then appears the repeated material. A total rerun of the three Pilgrimage Festivals: Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot (Sh'mot 34:18-23). We just had this list at the end of Mishpatim (23:14-17). And this list, in a slightly longer version, is repeated for a third round in parshat R'ei (D'varim 16:1-16).

Fascinating side issue: Each of these repetitions of the Shalosh Regalim is accompanied by a recitation of the mitzva LO TIVASHEL GEDI B'CHALEV IMO (Don't cook a kid in its mother's milk). Rashi famously explains that this mitzva appears three times because there are three prohibitions.

Don't cook them together; don't eat them together; don't benefit from such a mixture. But why are the three connected to the CHAGIM? Best speculation: That's when people ate meat.

So, why does the Torah repeat this list? The first time the obligation to go to Yerushalayim three times a year to appear before God in the Beit HaMikdash is in Mishpatim. After all the laws of Jewish courts and jurisprudence, we are reminded the source of our legal system is Divine. Ultimately, the Sanhedrin will be obligated to convene in the Temple precinct. 'For out of Tziyon comes Torah, and the word of God from Yerushalayim (Yeshayahu 2:3 & Micha 4:2, also repeated).

The second appearance is after God forgives our ancestors for the sin of the Eigel. Of course, this reminds us that our Temple offerings are part of the TESHUVA process.

Finally, in D'varim, we have the reading which is chanted in the Diaspora on their eighth day of Pesach, the second day of Shavuot, and on Shmini Atzeret, Because a CHAG can't be celebrated without recognition of the central place of the Beit HaMikdash in Judaism and the central place of Eretz Yisrael for the Holy Temple, and our entire relationship with God. We may not be making the claim at the end of Ketubot that one who lives outside of Israel seems to have no God, but we are stating that Eretz Yisrael is fundamental to our faith.

Even though my kids can't stand it when I rehash my marvelous musings, we should understand why God occasionally repeats principles for our edification.

Well, BARUCH HASHEM, I have grandchildren. 🙏