



March 3, 2018

טז אדר תשע"ח

Parashat Ki Tissa כ' תשא Exodus 30:11- 34:35

Stone – p 484 Hertz – p 352 Etz Hayim – p 523

Haftarah – I Kings מלכים א' 18:1-39

Stone – p 1160 Hertz – p 369 Etz Hayim – p 548

A D'var Torah on Parashat Ki Tissa
will be presented by Cyndee Levy

Kiddush following services is sponsored by
Ceil Tobin, Ellen Rosen, Nanci Gold and Mimi Levy
in honor of the birthdays of
Bernie, Hal, Bill and Marty

Minchah—5:30 PM

Seudah Sh'lshit

Shabbat Ends—6:37 PM

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

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DAILY SERVICE TIMES: Shabbat—9:00 AM & 5:30 PM Sunday—8:30 AM

Monday – Thursday—7:00 AM & 6:30 PM Friday—7:00 AM & 5:45 PM

Board of Directors: Kenneth H. Bohm, President'; Steve Bell, Executive VP; Ellis Frohman, Financial VP; Marty Levy, Ritual VP; Florence Schachter, Education VP; Elaine Farkas, Membership VP; Steve Roufa, Building & Grounds VP; Chris Brown, Fundraising VP; Lori Tesser, Treasurer; Mimi Levy, Secretary; Christy Brick, Sisterhood Rep.

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Traditional Congregation welcomes new members. If someone you know would like to receive membership information, please contact Membership VP Elaine Farkas at 954-558-1159.

On This Week's Torah Portion – Ki Tisa

The people saw that Moshe delayed in coming down from the mountain, and the people gathered around Aharon and said to him, "Rise up! Make for us gods that will go before us, because this man Moshe, who brought us up from the land of Egypt – we do not know what has become of him!" (32:1)

As we pointed out last year, the commentators all attempt to reconcile the stringency of the prohibition of idolatry with the fact that Gd's reaction to the sin of the golden calf was not to destroy the whole nation. Also, Aharon, who actually made the calf, was not punished, at least not at the time.

Abarbanel summarizes the ideas of those who preceded him and adds some additional interpretation of his own. Some common threads:

The people did not want a replacement for Gd; they wanted a replacement for Moshe, as it says "... for this man Moshe who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him!" (32:1)

If the people had considered the calf a god, they never would have let Moshe destroy it.

If Gd had considered the entire people guilty of idolatry, He would not have let Moshe talk Him out of destroying them.

The people themselves did not ask for an "idol," rather the "mixed multitude" that Moshe brought along with the Jewish people were the instigators, as it says, "... your people that you brought up from the land of Egypt has become corrupt" (32:7) – that is, it was Moshe, acting on his own volition, who allowed the "mixed multitude" to leave Egypt with the Jews. It also says "This is your god O Israel..." (32:8) indicating that someone who was *not* Israel was speaking.

Abarbanel indicates that the main issue that the people had was remaining connected to Gd. This was clearly a practical necessity, as only Gd's direct intervention was going to keep them alive during their wandering in the desert. Gd had already given them a miraculous well that had enough water to give to about 2-3 million people, and their livestock, and they were fed by *manna* from Heaven. But it is also a spiritual necessity, because life cut off from its source in the transcendent can hardly be called life at all – it is rather more like a beautiful cut flower that will shortly wither and die.

Up till now, Moshe Rabbeinu had been the connection the people had to Gd. Despite having witnessed the great miracles Gd did for them, and the love Gd evidently felt for them, the people found it very difficult to have faith in an invisible Deity Who was in complete control of their lives. While Moshe Rabbeinu was around, they had an "address" to turn to, but when they feared he had gone, leaving them stuck in an inhospitable desert, they demanded a replacement – something physical that they could latch onto to connect with Gd.

Rambam hypothesizes that this is exactly the way idolatry developed. People knew and accepted that there was a Gd Who created and ruled the universe, but they attempted to connect with Him through worshiping his "ministers," the sun, the moon, the stars, forces of nature, trees, mountains. Eventually, worship of the "ministers" replaced worship of Gd, as the forces of nature were ascribed independent power. The definition of idolatry is ascribing independent power to anything other than Gd (excluding of course our own Gd-given power to make moral choices).

The issue of not worshiping the forces of nature, not praying to them because they cannot do anything on their own, is at the same time an affirmation that Gd did not just set up the creation like a giant clock work and then sit back and watch it play itself out. Rather, we affirm that Gd takes an intimate interest in everything that happens, particularly in human beings, who have the capacity to grow spiritually and to recognize Gd in the creation. We affirm that Gd is both transcendent and immanent, and we believe that it is our job as human beings to recognize and live this fact.

To say that Gd is both transcendent and immanent appears to be self-contradictory, and indeed, if our awareness is bounded by our concepts, it is. We can, however, gain some insight from an analogy with modern physics. We have reached a point in physics where we can describe all the "elementary particles" of physics, the building blocks of atoms, molecules, and the macroscopic physical world, as levels of excitation of a single, all-pervading field. This field is self-interacting, and it is this self-interaction that gives rise to the manifold layers of structure that is physical creation. The Unified Field is transcendental to all this activity; all the activity is really nothing other than the *internal dynamics* of the Unified Field.

Perhaps we can get some insight from this analogy. Gd is the transcendental reality – there is nothing that can compare to Gd in any way. Gd is completely different from the physical creation. That is why He is called the Holy One – the root of the word *holy* means separate. Yet all of creation is just an expression of Gd, as our Sages say: *Gd is the Place of the world, the world is not Gd's place.* In other words, perhaps we can look upon the world as something not at all separate from Gd, but rather Gd expressing Himself, within Himself, in a kind of virtual way. What that might mean, I think we have to leave to the prophets to elucidate.

Shabbat Shalom! Rafi Rabinoff

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, March 15

General Board Meeting, 7:30 PM. All members are welcome to attend.

Remember our Adopt-a-Students! We are still collecting donations for the Ethiopian students in Israel that we help to support in their college studies. Please send your donation to Traditional Congregation Chesed Fund, marked for AAS. Thank you!

We're looking for...YOU—to sponsor a Kiddush! Call Marian, 314-576-5230 to reserve your date. Not ready to sponsor but would like to contribute to offset our Kiddush costs? It's easy to do—you can mail your donation to Traditional (note: Kiddush Fund in memo) or donate online at <https://www.traditional-congregation.org/donate> and select Kiddush Fund Donation. Thank you!



Visit our website www.traditional-congregation.org

PRAYER

Among the many appetites of Man there is a craving after God.

Among the many attributes of Man there is a talent for worshiping God.

Jews who wandered in deserts beneath the stars
knew their hearts were hungry for God.

Jews who studied in candle-lit ghetto rooms thirsted longingly after God.

But we who are smothered with comfort
Sometimes forget to listen to God.

*Help us, O God, to recognize our need.
To hear the yearning whisper of our hearts.*

Help us to seek the silence of the desert and the
thoughtfulness of the house of study.

*Bless us, like our ancestors in ancient days, with the most precious gift:
a sense of Thy presence.*

Brush us with the wind of the wings of Thy being,
fill us with the awe of Thy holiness.

We, too, will praise, glorify, and exalt Thy name.

Ruth F. Brin (adapted)

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

Patience is not passive.

On the contrary it is active; it is concentrated strength.

Edward G. Bulwer-Lytton