



## REPAIR

**I**N OUR PATHWAYS THROUGH LIFE, WE OFTEN ENCOUNTER damage of various kinds. Sometimes the damage is the effect of our own actions, sometimes of those of other people. Dealing with the effect of damage, trying to repair it, occupies a large part of our daily lives.

The Sedra<sup>1</sup> describes the catastrophe of the Golden Calf: an extreme and archetypal form of damage. Yet it also provides advice about repair.

The Jewish people led by Moses, reached Mount Sinai. There was an immediate sense of unity. The Sages tell us the whole people was 'like one man with one heart'<sup>2</sup>. Then, some days later, they heard the Ten Commandments from G-d. The Divine revelation there was a uniquely high point in human experience, opening the doors of perception: they realized that all is One, with a sense of wholeness and purity.

As often happens, this brief ecstatic moment of inspiration was followed by a lull, a waiting period, which induced a sense of absence. Moses, their teacher and guide, had disappeared up the mountain. The Jewish people felt that they had been left alone.

So, then came the making of the Golden Calf, and the orgy which

followed. The Sages tell us that the women refused to take part. The Golden Calf signified a violent male fall into depravity, damage for their own time and also for generations to come...

Can the damage be repaired? Yes, that is the emphatic promise of Jewish teaching. Repentance is always possible. In fact the Sages point to the mass Repentance after the Golden Calf as giving an example for the future, to emphasise that Repentance is always within reach<sup>3</sup>.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that there is a hint about this Repentance, right at the beginning of the Sedra. Speaking of counting the Jewish people the Torah says "lift up their heads". Why does it use this expression to mean 'counting'?

In the Torah, everything is significant. To lift up your head means climbing to a higher level, to a realm beyond your head, beyond Reason. This suggests a step towards the point at which the essence of the Soul joins with G-d, expressing faith, inspiration and utter dedication. These words at the beginning of the Sedra are a foretaste of the intense inner turn of Repentance, *Teshuvah*, which the Jewish people reached after the fall of the Golden Calf. This is one form of repair.

Another meaning of lifting one's head is not to go *beyond* Reason but rather to *elevate* Reason. This means, to reach a higher, more wholesome way of thinking and of reasoning. To gain an openness and a depth of understanding which will, in a natural way, exclude the Golden Calf and anything like it. The key to this, suggests the Rebbe, is Torah study, seeking not just the knowledge but also the inwardness, the paradigm shift, the sense of meaning and the perspective on life which Torah study alone can achieve.

Through this lifting of one's head, the damage of the Golden Calf is repaired: if possible, before it happens, right at the beginning of the Sedra. But if not then, at any time. Repair, Tikkun, is always possible.<sup>4</sup> And our goal, as Jews, is the Tikkun of the whole world...

1. Exodus 30:11-34. 2. See Rashi to Exodus 19:2. 3. See Talmud Avodah Zarah 4b-5a. 4. Based freely on *Sefer HaSichot 5751* vol. 1, pp.363-374.

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### *SEDRA KI TISA*

#### **REPENTANCE**

Michal Rosen felt very restless. It was a feeling she felt because she knew she had done something wrong. Something very wrong. And she couldn't stop thinking about it. She felt so upset because that morning she had taken an exam and she had cheated. Yes, cheated!

The word tasted bitter in her mouth as she uttered it silently. She felt so bad for doing it. It was something she had always been very careful about, always tried to avoid....

She came home from school still looking preoccupied and upset.

"Hello, Michal, dear," Mrs Rosen greeted her daughter as she walked through the door, "how was your day?"

"It was okay..." Michal replied, as she hung up her coat. She came into the kitchen to get a drink. "I think I'm going to go upstairs to my room until dinner." "Is everything okay, Michal? Why the long face?" Mrs Rosen asked her, concerned.

Michal just shrugged her shoulders. She couldn't bring herself to tell her mother what she had done. She was too embarrassed.

"If there is anything you want to talk about, sweetie, I'm right here," Mrs Rosen said.

"Well, I guess....um...I feel really bad about something I did today in school....", Michal started saying awkwardly.

Then she just blurted out “I cheated on my test today! And I feel horrible about it. I can’t seem to shake off the feeling. I feel so guilty. I was unsure about one of the answers and Dina’s paper was visible and I could see the answer clearly right there....and I don’t know what made me do it...I just copied what she wrote on my own paper...I feel so bad now...”

“Oh, Michal,” Mrs Rosen said, as she put her arm around Michal affectionately, “You know what, I’m glad to hear that you regret what you did. It shows a true sign of courage and maturity.”

“Well, I’m definitely never going to cheat again. That’s one thing I know for sure!”

“Sounds like that’s the best decision you can make!” Mrs Rosen suddenly smiled. “You know, this actually reminds me of the Sedra this week. Want to hear why?” “Sure,” said Michal.

“This week’s Sedra shows G-d’s great mercy for His people. After the Jews sinned with the Golden Calf, G-d was angry. However, after Moses’ heartfelt pleas, G-d accepted their Repentance. G-d gave Moses a second pair of Tablets with the Law, and Moses brought them to the people on a day which became the date of Yom Kippur. We see from this Sedra that G-d forgives any wrongdoings of those who sincerely repent for their actions.”

“Well, I guess I do feel really bad about what I did. And I sure know better for next time. I have an exam next week and you know what, I’m going to start learning now so that I can walk into the room for the exam feeling confident, and not think of what anyone else might be writing.”

“I’m proud of you sweetie,” Mrs Rosen said, “That’s a lesson well learned. Good for you!”

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