

THEY HAVE STRAYED QUICKLY

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Ki Sisa

They Have Strayed QUICKLY

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #584, The Meat Delivery At Your Door. Good Shabbos!

In this week's parsha, while Moshe was up on Mt. Sinai receiving the Luchos [Tablets bearing the Ten Commandments], the people became impatient waiting for his return. Aharon created the Golden Calf for them and they began worshipping it. G-d told Moshe: *"Go, descend - for your nation that you have brought up from Egypt has degenerated. They have strayed QUICKLY from the way that I have commanded them; they have made themselves a molten calf, prostrated themselves to it and sacrificed to it, and they said 'This is your god, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt.'"* [Shemos 32:7-8].

Rav Yeruchum Levovitz, the Mirer Mashgiach, commented on the words *"They have strayed QUICKLY from the way I have commanded them"*. Why is it important to know, he asked, that they quickly strayed from the path? Would they be any less culpable if they had slowly strayed from the path?

Rav Yeruchum Levovitz explained that had they strayed slowly from the path, it would be not be condoned, but it would at least be understandable. After they stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai and heard G-d speak to them directly -- the only people in the history of the world to have such an experience en masse -- it might be understandable if one or two or three years after that great event, the experience had begun to dissipate from their collective memories. This is the nature of human beings. We forget. Even major events in our lives become hazy in our memories as time goes on. Eventually they wear off.

The situation here was quite a different story. They heard *"I am the L-rd your G-d"* on the sixth of Sivan. The events with the Golden Calf happened on the seventeenth of Tamuz -- less than six weeks later! In 40 days, one can go from the experience of Revelation at Mt. Sinai to the making of

a Golden Calf, unfortunately the timing brings into question the whole sincerity of their acceptance of the Torah and their declaration of "*We will do and we will listen.*"

It is always somewhat depressing to me to see how short a time it takes -- in myself and in others -- for Yom Kippur to "wear off". We can reach a very high level on Yom Kippur. We spend the whole day in shul and reach a level of spirituality that we do not attain the whole year. How long does it last?

Chazal quote the pasuk [verse] written in connection with taking the Four Species on Succos: "*And you shall take for yourselves on the first day...*" [Vayikra 23:40]. Chazal say it is called the "first day" because Succos is the first day in which Yom Kippur wears off, so to speak, and one might begin to sin again. Some people "avoid the rush". Why wait until Succos?

I remember from my youth -- and there are still such places today -- where the Rabbi had to get up after Neilah and urge the people to Daven Ma'ariv after Yom Kippur and not run out as soon as the shofar was blown! Granted, these might have been the "3 day a year Jews", but even they should have acted differently.

In the Ma'ariv shmoneh esray after Yom Kippur we recite, "Selach lanu, mechal lanu..." [forgive us] as we do in every weekday Amidah. But we should ask -- what could we have done since Yom Kippur ended and atoned for our sins that we have to ask for forgiveness again?

If we "leave so quickly" from the path of the commandments that we were given, what does that say about the impact of the "spiritually elevating experience" that we ostensibly just went through? This is the emphasis of the word "quickly" in the previously quoted pasuk. It is only the 17th day of Tamuz. It is not even a year! It is not even a quarter! It is just a little over a month!

This was a terrible indictment of the Jewish people and it is an indictment of us if after a Yom Kippur or another spiritually moving experience, we move back on the next day to "business as usual".

The Torah Describes The Luchos' Uniqueness When They Are Being Destroyed

The pasukim in our parsha read as follows: "*Moses turned and descended from the mountain, with the two the Luchos in his hand, Luchos inscribed on both of their surfaces; they were inscribed on one side and on the other. The Luchos are the work of G-d and the script was the script of G- d, etched on the Luchos.*" [Shemos 32:15-16]. The Torah explains these Luchos. They were the most unique item in all of creation! They were something written by the Hand of G-d.

What does Moshe Rabbeinu do? He takes the Luchos and he breaks them!

The Shemen HaTov by Rabbi Dov Weinberger makes a very interesting observation. Is this the place to describe the Luchos? The proper place to describe them would have been earlier in the narrative, when they were first given to Moshe [Shemos 31:1]. Why now -- as they are being broken -- does the Torah first go into the detail describing how unique these Luchos were?

The simple interpretation is that the Torah is emphasizing - DESPITE the fact that the Luchos were so special and so unique, NEVERTHELESS Moshe broke them. The Shemen HaTov gives a different insight, which is a very true commentary about life in general.

We rarely appreciate what we have while we have it. Only when we are about to lose something do we first appreciate what we had. Earlier, when Moshe was first given the Luchos, we thought that they were ours and that we would have them until the end of time. We hardly noticed their special quality. But now when we are about to lose them, we finally begin to appreciate them.

We know this is so true. When we have someone we love and appreciate, it is often not until we are close to losing him or her that we appreciate what he or she was to us all along.

If one has ever had the experience of having a child who was very sick and then recovered from an illness, one knows that the kiss he gives that child before they go to sleep at night is a different kiss than he used to give the child before the child got sick. If someone, G-d Forbid, comes close to losing that precious little child, the child becomes even more important to them.

That is the way people are. We only appreciate things in their absence. That is why the pasuk only emphasizes the unique characteristics of the Luchos here, at the time of their destruction.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Ki Sisa are provided below:

- Tape # 046 - Dealing With Illness on Shabbos
- Tape # 089 - Returning From Medical Emergency on Shabbos.
- Tape # 137 - The Census: Can Jews be Counted?
- Tape # 184 - You and Seriously Ill: How Much Responsibility
- Tape # 230 - The Mitzvah of Shekalim and Davening Mussaf
- Tape # 274 - Saying Tehillim at Night
- Tape # 320 - The Melacha of Dyeing
- Tape # 364 - The Melacha of Memachek
- Tape # 408 - Fax Machines on Shabbos
- Tape # 452 - Kiddush Shabbos Morning
- Tape # 496 - Tallis: Bringing It Home On Shabbos
- Tape # 540 - Machatzis Hashekel
- Tape # 584 - The Meat Delivery At Your Door
- Tape # 628 - Mincha - How Early, How Late?
- Tape # 671 - Neigel Vasser - Washing Hands When Arising
- Tape # 716 - Shliach Mitzvah: Is He Always Safe?
- Tape # 760 - Can You Sell Your Aveiros?

Tape # 804 - Great Grandchildren

Tape # 848 - Oy! The Fridge Light Is On

Tape # 892 - Borer: Can You Separate White Meat from the Dark Meat?

Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#) Seattle, WA;

Technical Assistance by [Dovid Hoffman](#), Baltimore, MD

RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.