

Weekly Parsha

written by breslov.org

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Based on Likutey Halakhot, Chukat HaAkum 2:6–7

Dvar Torah for Parshat Ki Tisa

“God said to Moshe...ki tisa et rosh, when you take a census (literally, ‘when you lift the head’) of the Israelites...each shall give an atonement offering...everyone included...must give a half-shekel...” (Exodus 30:11–12).

Lifting your head, writes Reb Noson, means cutting through the mirage that chains you a lower, less spiritual quality of life.

Lifting your head can be accomplished by giving tzedakah, charity. In addition to the obvious result of helping the cause to which you have donated, giving tzedakah has two not-so-obvious, but related, by-products. The first is that the true beauty of the Jewish people becomes more visible: all can see that Jews are kind, generous and charitable. The other result, even more subtle, is that God’s greatness, His kindness and generosity, also becomes more apparent.

Perceiving God’s greatness, “lifting the head” and growing wiser, causes the mirage to vanish. What seemed apparent, so true and solid, is no longer there to confuse our thinking and throw us off course.

We all know, however, that giving tzedakah is not the easiest mitzvah. This struggle is hinted at by the Torah’s telling us to give a “half-shekel.” Each of us has his tests and struggles in which two lights, one finite, one infinite, seem balanced, half and half. Until and unless we “lift the head,” the mirage persists. Giving tzedakah lifts our thinking so that we see clearly how the infinite far out-weighs the finite.

But which tzedakah? Should you give to Congregation Yeshiva Mishkan or to the Golden Calf Society (God forbid!)? A donation to either would be an expression of Jewish generosity. Your choice will reflect what you image yourself to be. If you picture yourself as a Jew who will emulate God's compassion and graciousness, then Congregation Yeshiva Mishkan will benefit from your largesse. One who harbors, God forbid, an ambition to be a Golden Calfer throws away his money on the production of more mirages.

So, writes Reb Noson, our ability to image is like the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It can go either way. It depends on what we want. To help us make the right choice, we are advised of two mitzvahs—to imitate God's behavior and to keep company with genuine Torah scholars—and a third mitzvah, to avoid associating with those who don't incorporate Torah values into their lifestyle.

agutn Shabbos!

Shabbat Shalom!

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