



Dvar Torah for Parshat Ki Tisa

Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Shluchin* 5:6–16

The people saw that Moshe was late in descending from the mountain...they said to Aharon, "Make us something to revere that will lead us, because we don't know what's become of the man Moshe who took us out of Egypt" (Exodus 32:1). Although Aharon tried to fend them off, ultimately "he made a [golden] calf" (ibid. v.4).

The Golden Calf was a catastrophe which still has negative ramifications. Although Moshe Rabbeinu's prayers mitigated God's immediate reaction (to destroy the Jewish people, God forbid), our Sages teach that all our national suffering since then has been partially due to the Golden Calf. That means all our national, communal mistakes contain some element of that tainted thinking. What was wrong with the Israelites' reaction to the presumed "passing away" of Moshe Rabbeinu, to his "whereabouts unknown?" Was anything right about it?

What was right about their reaction was their understanding that a human being needs instruction and guidance in his quest for spiritual perfection, Godliness. A human being needs a tzaddik*, a "man Moshe who took us out of Egypt" to "lead us" out of future states of exile. So far, so good.

What makes a tzaddik a tzaddik? Any mature, rational person will tell you it is not the length of his beard or the embroidery of his robes. It is not even the number of his adherents or the miracles he performs! What makes a tzaddik is his *ruach hakodesh*. What's that, you say? Most often *ruach hakodesh* is translated as "holy spirit," an enhanced ability to perceive future events and the inner core of people. Reb Noson writes that *ruach hakodesh* means also the Spirit of Holiness. All the instruction and advice a tzaddik makes available to those interested in refining the soul, infuses them with Holiness.

This was the flaw. Now that the physical Moshe is gone, they thought, his *ruach hakodesh* is also gone. It is true that *ruach hakodesh* can be lost. When we lose sight of a tzaddik, when we can no longer find him and—worst of all—when we no longer look for him, *ruach hakodesh* is lost. But it is always there, waiting to be found.

It is always there because the tzaddik always has it. From his perspective, he—his *ruach hakodesh*—is always alive. It is only from our perspective that he/it is hidden or eclipsed. He has left and taken his beard and robes with him, but his *ruach hakodesh* endures. It endures in his writings and in his disciples. Only from our perspective can a tzaddik "die" (Zohar 2:174).

This was the flaw. They should have turned to Aharon, to Chur and to Yehoshua, Moshe's closest disciples and asked: What does Moshe teach us now? Not only should they have asked, they should have begged. Reb Noson writes that a person's need for a tzaddik is so great that he should crawl on all fours to find him, even if he will meet such a tzaddik only in the final hours of life!

If one does find such a tzaddik, he must continue to search for him! That *ruach hakodesh* that you accessed yesterday—is that all there is? Has it no more depth than what you were capable of perceiving yesterday? Hasn't the world changed in the last 24 hours, haven't *you* changed, so that the light shines somewhere new, showing some fresh approach to God?

Even when one finds no one else from whom to learn, no one better qualified than himself to shine the tzaddik's *ruach hakodesh*, then he must do his best to re-examine what he stills has, and try, try, try to make it shine. Reb Noson writes that one must so cherish closeness to God, that he sheds tears in order to learn as much as he can from a proper tzaddik.

May God help us to cherish His closeness, and to have humility and courage enough to admit our need of the tzaddik, and to accept and delve into his *ruach hakodesh*. Amen.

agutn Shabbos!

Shabbat Shalom!

*Reb Noson writes that even the greatest tzaddik needs a tzaddik—himself. He must push against the walls of his *ruach hakodesh* so that it grows and grows.

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