

I was very happy when I learned what my Torah portion was for my Bar Mitzvah. To me the portion about the Golden Calf is one of the most interesting portions to cover and it was great to learn more about it during my preparation for this day.

When I worked with Rabbi Rosenblatt on this Dvar Torah, I learned that there is a very key and important lesson for me in this portion, that does not focus specifically on the Golden Calf itself, but more about how G-d worked with Moses and the Jewish people to connect us to the Ten Commandments and our beliefs.

It is a lesson that I really connected with and am happy to share here today.

There was a movie called the Pursuit of Happiness that you may have seen about a homeless man named Chris Gardner. He and his 2-year old son end up in a very bad situation.

In the movie our early impression is of him trying to pull things together to go to an interview for a non-paying internship at a stock brokerage company - he ends up getting hired . During the internship he also works to pay his expenses by selling medical equipment on the side.

Chris made calls for 10 hours each day without any breaks. Eventually his hard work pays off, because he is offered the paying job everyone was working get.

He keeps working hard until he gets fully certified as a broker and eventually opened his own very successful firm. Chris Gardner's story is example that successes won't just come to you - you have to work for it. And believe me – he really appreciated all he had achieved.

Also, if life throws you a curve ball then you have to try your best to adjust, see the change, and keep working hard to hit it out of the park. Believe it or not this is also the story of the golden calf

The Torah teaches us that after Moshe broke the first set of tablets, Hashem instructed him to make the set of Tablets himself.

In my humble opinion this is the most important pasuk in this week's Torah reading.

G-d is saying that the Jewish people really made a mistake with the first one, so they and their leader Moses should be involved in fixing the problem, therefore Moses has to make a new set himself with hard work.

This is key, because once the Jewish people made their big mistake they had to fix it and work hard to do it “the very same day”. The hard work was really the key.

This idea of the importance of hard work is a core Torah lesson and G-d reinforces this as a good thing by making it easier for the Jewish People to succeed.

If you compare the original 10 commandments to some of the promises that Hashem makes to Moshe AFTER the Golden Calf you will notice that G-d makes it more comfortable for the Jewish people. Here are three different ways that you could show this

- 1) In the 10 commandments it says for example, “I am a jealous Gd, “ whereas in the promises delivered AFTER the Golden Calf it says, “I am a patient Gd.”
- 2) In the 10 commandments it says that punishment can be felt for several generations. However, in the promises AFTER the golden calf Hashem promises that children will not be burdened with their parent’s sins.
- 3) And lastly in the 10 commandments it emphasizes that there are sins that cannot be wiped clean, but in the promises or the covenant AFTER the Golden Calf it says that G-d cleans away all sins.

The point is that where the 10 commandments is very strict, the covenant that Moshe gets AFTER the 10 commandments is softer, more forgiving of mistakes and it teaches us that the Torah makes room for us to slip up.

It promises that we will be fine as long as we do Teshuvah, or repentance and get back on board with Torah.

So an important lesson that we get from this week's Parsha is the idea that G-d made us human and we are prone to mistakes. What G-d expects is that we correct course and learn from those mistakes.

There is still one more important lesson we learn from the Golden Calf.

The first tablets were delivered prefabricated by Hashem – G-d made them for us 100%, however the second time around Hashem tells Moshe to make your own tablets.

When you make something yourself you feel more proud and more connected to the object. So G-d makes it that Moses has to make his own tablets so he can feel more connected to it and feel more of a significant bond to it.

Rabbi Meir Hachoen of Dvinsk said the reason Moshe broke the first tablets was because the children of Israel were treating Moshe and the Torah as some magical holy object that simply appeared.

Moshe wanted to teach them that even though holiness only comes from Gd, this same holiness can be invited into our world by creating the right kind of spaces with our thoughts and deeds.

Therefore he broke the tablets to prove that they were not magical. However the making of the second ones was

actually more important because it proved that we could invite G-d into our lives when we make things the right way.

Also, this is like becoming a bar mitzvah boy. You have to work for it, study hard, and act like an adult.

So overall, life and becoming a Bar Mitzvah connects to this portion.

I feel this sense of accomplishment and commitment today and this is a lesson that I now take forward in my Judaism. I had to work hard to prepare the Torah reading and I know that I will value the Mitzvot I put effort into.

All of this makes me realize how important the actual work is for preparing for the Bar Mitzvah – it is the part of the process that makes our people endure – we all worked to be a part of the Jewish People – it makes us care!