

לדרוש בשבת

Ki Tisa 5781

March 5-6, 2021

This week's Lidrosh B'Shabbat is based on [Parashat Ki Tisa](#)
by Rabbi David Silber

Parashat Ki Tisa falls squarely between 4 *parashiot* that deal with the Mishkan.

Source: Shemot 32

We find in this week's *parasha* the most important story outside of Sefer Bereishit: the story of the Golden Calf, which redefines the Israelites' connection to God forever. The *parasha* is about the breaking and reconstruction of the covenant. Only once the covenant is rebuilt can there be a Mishkan, which is the focus of the next two *parashiot*. The *luchot* are the לוחות הברית — the tablets of the covenant — and if there is no covenant, then there is no Mishkan.

The story of the *luchot* — of Moshe coming down the mountain and breaking the tablets — is significant because when he breaks the tablets, he can't build the Mishkan.

Source: Shemot 32:16

The Torah makes it clear that the *luchot* are made by God:

וְהַלַּחֹת מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים הֵמָּה וְהַמְּכָתֵב מְכָתֵב אֱלֹהִים הוּא חָרוֹת עַל־הַלְחָת:
"The *luchot* are the work of God, and the writing is the writing of God"

Source: Shemot 35:30 - 36:2

All of the parts of the Mishkan are created by the people. The Torah tells us that to build the Mishkan, an architect is hired — Betzalel — and he has a whole crew of *chachamim*, of men and women. These *chachamim* know how to make all of the details; they're designers — לחשוב מחשבות — so they can do everything. But there is one thing that they cannot do: create the *luchot*, because the Torah says that the *luchot* are the work of God.

The ark is the critical part of the Mishkan, so if you break the *luchot*, you can't build the Mishkan. There were 2 *parashiot* prior to Ki Tisa about the instructions for the Mishkan, but now it can't be built. The only way to build it is if God gives Moshe a second set of tablets. Our *parasha*, therefore, revolves around the question of: will Israel be able to receive the Torah, the second set of *luchot*?"

Obviously, the Golden Calf makes this impossible, and thus, the *parasha* is about Moshe reconciling the relationship between God and Israel so that:

- 1) Israel can receive the second set of tablets, which leads to
- 2) ושכנתי בתוכם — that God can dwell amongst the people. God can't dwell amongst them if they're worshipping a Golden Calf.

The story of the Golden Calf is one of those stories that's a story in a story. The Torah makes it clear that the story is in relation to what precedes it and what follows it. Only by looking at the story in the context of the *parashiot* about the Mishkan that surround it can we fully grasp the significance of this moment.

שבת שלום!