

Reconciliation in Marriage Difficulties

As we explore this *Parashah*, we will see how *Adonai*, Israel's Husband, handles His unfaithful spouse. This is a busy portion, detailing for us things for the home, *Bezalel* (the artist chosen to create His home furnishings), the setting of a weekly date (*Shabbat*), the incident of unfaithfulness (the golden calf), the interceding by Moses and the revelation of the character of the Almighty. At the end not only does *Moses's* face shine, but we also see the shining face of the Faithful Husband who loves His wife perfectly and forgives her.

What an exciting mountain top experience! Meanwhile, down in the valley, the children of Israel had become extremely impatient. The people saw that Moses had delayed in descending the mountain, and the people gathered around Aaron and said to him, "...Get up, make us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what's become of him!" (*Exodus 32:1*)

When he descended from the mountain, Moses had to go from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the heights of fellowship with *Adonai*, to the depths of idolatry with his wayward people. They were clearly guilty of this grievous sin and worthy of death. But *Adonai* heeded Moses's intercession and spared their lives.

This whole incident was a very traumatic event for the young nation. The ramifications would affect Israel's history for years to come. A proper conclusion to this whole affair was important for both *Adonai* and Israel. It was as if this young, newly married couple had their first serious marriage difficulty. It left both parties in need of taking precautions to prohibit it ever happening again. Also, the closeness and intimacy of the relationship needed to be completely restored.

The only difference between this marriage difficulty and our human ones is that the contributing factor in this one was completely one-sided. Israel was clearly 100% at fault. Sad to say that this new bride had already begun to demonstrate a problem which would seriously damage this divine marriage throughout all of their years together – the problem of marital unfaithfulness. It will take millennia to root this sin out, but *Adonai*, the faithful Husband, promised His eternal love for His covenant people. Eventually, when Messiah returns the second time, *Adonai* will have so worked in Israel that He will come to find a completely pure Bride.

Steps of Reconciliation

But back to the immediate problem, we now see *Adonai* and Moses take certain necessary steps to make this terrible situation right.

Testing the Leader (*Exodus 32:7-14*): The first step was to make sure that the leader was properly trained. Hence, *Adonai* gave Moses a test: He threatened to utterly destroy the unfaithful people. But Moses, proving himself faithful and loyal, interceded on Israel's behalf (as he will do on other occasions). *Adonai* (remember, this was a test) responded accordingly and re-affirmed Moses's leadership and His covenant with Israel.

Terminating the Troublemakers (*Exodus 32:26-35*): Next, after affirming the spiritual leadership of Moses, *Adonai* took punitive measures in order to weed out the troublemakers from the camp. This discipline came through a tough decision making process. Moses asked the people, "*Whoever is on Adonai's side, let him come to me*" (*Exodus 32:26*). Those who did not, fell victim to the sword of discipline. The remainder of the camp was also struck by a plague from *Adonai*. The discipline was severe. But the crime was severe. Just as Moses was receiving the holy *Torah*, Israel was deep in the midst of practicing unholy idolatry. The severe reaction from *Adonai* was designed to show Israel the seriousness of their sin and to work repentance in them.

Face-to-face Communication in the Tent (*Exodus 33:7-11*): Next, Moses set up a new communication system between the people, himself, and *Adonai*. The procedure was that Moses set up a tent outside the Camp where he would go to talk with *Adonai*, who made Himself visible through a pillar of cloud: "*Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the Tent of Meeting*" (*Vv. 7*). Among other things, this system would keep the lines of communication open thus avoiding future trouble. If anyone

questioned *Adonai*, they could bring it to Moses who would, in turn, discuss it with *Adonai*. Moses called this tent, *The Tent of Meeting (Ohel Moed)*. This was apparently a temporary substitute for the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) and therefore, "... draws attention to the alienation of Israel from God. The camp has become spiritually polluted by the impurity produced by the golden calf affair."

Teaching the Remnant (Exodus 34:5-7): The last part of this restoration process is where the Thirteen Attributes of *Adonai* are revealed. This final phase of restoration will only come when Israel truly understands and believes that *Adonai* is who He is (the First Commandment). Hence, a magnificent revelation of *Adonai*'s character was in order. This would let them know how different *Adonai* is from the god they made out of gold. Also, this revelation helped them to know the extent of forgiveness that *Adonai* granted to those who truly repent. And it taught Israel the truth about *Adonai* so they could grow in their appreciation of Him. Finally, this passage provided the basis upon which they will, one day, recognize the *Messiah*: "²² While My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and cover you with My hand, until I have passed by" (Exodus. 33:22). 🎵 *In Your presence, that's where I belong, in Your presence, O Lord my God...* 🎵