

# Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

Ki Sisa 5768

And the people heard this bad thing, and they mourned, and they did not put on their ornaments. And Hashem said to Moshe, say to the children of Israel, you are a stiff-necked people; if I go up in your midst for one moment, I will consume you; and now, take off your ornament from you and I will know what I will do to you. (33:4-5)

The Alshich points out a seeming contradiction here: the first verse says that their ornaments were already off and they did not put them on, but from the second verse it appears that they were still on at this point, and G-d told them to take them off.

He explains that there were two groups among the Jewish people: those on a higher level were called "the children of Israel" whereas those on a lower level, who were somewhat sinful, were called "the people". Neither of these groups actually worshipped the golden calf (the worshippers of the calf had already been executed earlier) but they were guilty of not protesting against those who worshipped it. For the lower group, this sin of not protesting, combined with their other sins, was enough to make them lose their "ornaments" immediately after the incident of the golden calf. The "ornaments" were the two crowns given by the angels to each Jew when they said "naaseh venishma" – we will do and we will hear the Torah. Thus the Torah states, "And the people" – the lower group of Jews –

"heard this bad thing" – that G-d would no longer be in their midst – "and they mourned" – because now they suffered a double blow – they had already lost their crowns, and now G-d would no longer be in their midst.

The higher group, for the single sin of not protesting, did not deserve to lose their crowns. However, G-d told Moshe to tell "the children of Israel" – this higher group – to take off their crowns for the following reason. The world was created for the purpose of bringing down G-d's presence among men (Bereishis Rabbah 19:6). The first man and woman, Adam and Chava, were perfectly suited for this purpose, but then they sinned and the stench of the snake entered them. At this point G-d's wisdom saw that to achieve their purpose, people would have to die, and their death would purify them and ready them to be a chariot for the Divine Presence like the angels. All of mankind gets the purification of death, but for His holy Jewish nation, G-d added an additional level of purification: exile. Avraham, father of all Jews, asked G-d to give them exile instead of

Gehinom, and thus our Sages say (Eiruvin 19a) that Avraham sits at the door of Gehinom and refuses to let his children in, since they have suffered exile instead. The exile prepares them for their purpose of bringing the Divine Presence down into this world.

When the Torah was given and the Jews said "naaseh venishma" their stench departed, and they no longer needed the purifications of death and exile. Therefore they were given two crowns, one to protect them from death and the other to protect them from exile. But with the sin of the golden calf, this all came to an end, and they were back where they had started.

They had the stench of the snake, and they would not get rid of it unless they went through the processes of death and exile. Therefore G-d said to Moshe, "Tell them to take off their crowns. Woe to the Jews if they do not take off their crowns, for then they will never experience death and exile and will never achieve their purpose in this world."

This is the meaning of the verse, "Take off your ornament from you and I will know what I will do to you." I alone know the good that I have planned for you, and it is for your own good that I ask you to take off your crowns, for if you keep them, you will never achieve that status."



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