

Fall of the Island (Ki Tisah)

No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee. -John Donne

The Children of Israel commit one of their worst national sins. They worship the Golden Calf. They worship an idol, shortly after God Himself commands them not to worship idols. In His wrath, God threatens to annihilate the nascent Jewish nation. Moses argues and pleads for mercy and God relents.

Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Prague, the Kli Yakar (1550-1619), on Exodus 30:12 explains, that one of the ameliorating factors that invoked God's mercy was that Israel sinned as a nation, but they were also judged as a nation. If they would have been judged as individuals, God would not have been as forgiving.

When judging individuals, God will scrutinize each person's unique 'balance sheet' of good and bad, and when God takes the microscope to review our actions, we may not like the results. However, when we attach ourselves to a group, the merits of the group as a whole (assuming it's a good group) can shield us from Divine wrath or even warranted justice and keep us in the purview of Divine mercy.

May we remain united for good purposes.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

To the speedy recovery of our cousin, Ari Spitz, who was very badly wounded this Tuesday in Gaza. May he have a full recovery and healing together with all the sick and injured of Israel.