

Good Shabbos Everyone. In this week's parsha *Ekev* the Torah tells us of how Moshe came down from Mt. Sinai and found that the Bnai Yisroel (Children of Israel) had made a golden calf. Moshe was disappointed with the behavior of the Bnai Yisroel who had violated one of the Ten Commandments, by bowing down to the golden calf.

The Midrash tells us that Hashem had in fact wanted to destroy the Bnai Yisroel for worshipping the golden calf. However, instead of smashing all the Jews, Hashem let Moshe smash the first set of *luchos* – tablets on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments. Moshe then climbed Har Sinai once again, later to present a second set of *luchos* – tablets to the Bnai Yisroel. We see from this parsha that Hashem gives Jews a second chance.

The kabbalistic work *Tomar Devorah* explains that the essence of Man is the struggle to imitate Hashem's character traits. Man – "*Odom*" – in Hebrew is related to the word "*Adameh*" – meaning "*I will become similar.*" Thus, the purpose of life is to work on our character traits so that we become more like Hashem. We saw above how Hashem gave the Bnai Yisroel a second chance. Thus, we too must always try to give our fellow Jews a second chance. The following story illustrates the power giving another Jew a second chance.

Dov Hager* is an exceptionally busy person. Aside from being a devoted husband and father to his six children, he is involved with local community affairs (yeshivah, Bais Yaakov, and the eiruv) as well as with national and international tzedakah organizations. Dov runs a successful curtain and window treatment business with offices in his home and in downtown Boston. At times his phones seem like a blaring out-of-sync orchestra, as his house seems like a raucous whirlwind of activity.

One night he had an appointment with a Mrs. Silver* in the neighboring town of Lowell, to show her swatches of fabric for curtains and to discuss various options of draperies, valances, Chinese shades, blinds, and screens.

Much to Mrs. Silver's dismay, Dov did not keep the appointment; he simply forgot about it. His many responsibilities had become chaotic and he had neglected to enter the appointment in his calendar. At 10 o'clock in the evening, Mrs. Silver called his office and left a blistering message on his answering machine. The next morning when Dov retrieved his messages, the wrath of the woman's voice on the phone was almost tangible.

Immediately, Dov called Mrs. Silver to apologize. "*I have no excuses,*" he said honestly. "*I am simply overworked. I must have lost the note where I had penciled in our appointment. Please forgive me.*"

Mrs. Silver was not in a forgiving mood. "*You're a business- man,*" she said. "*It's your job to have a better system of recording things. My time is just as valuable as yours.*"

"*I am truly sorry,*" said Dov in embarrassed humility, "*Please give me another appointment and let me make amends.*" He paused a moment and added, "And this time I promise I will be there on time."

Mrs. Silver was not a religious Jew and Dov was concerned that his failure to show up at her home, aside from being poor business practice, was a chillul Hashem – a desecration of Hashem's name.

There was a long pause on the phone. For a moment Dov thought Mrs. Silver had disconnected him, but then he heard her sigh and say reluctantly, "*One Jew should always give another Jew a chance. You can come Monday morning at 10 o'clock and I expect you to be on time.*"

"*You can count on it,*" Dov said confidently. On Monday morning, at five to 10, Dov arrived at Mrs. Silver's beautiful home on Spring Lane in Lowell. He rang the doorbell and waited. Suddenly the door opened in a flash and a teenaged girl started screaming hysterically, "*What are you doing here? I didn't call you. You don't belong here!*"

Dov was shocked. "*I have a 10 o'clock appointment with Mrs. Silver. Is this her home?*"

"*My mother just collapsed in the kitchen,*" the girl cried. "*We're waiting for an ambulance. I think she had a stroke!*"

"*I'm a medic,*" Dov said as he ran back to his car. Dov was a mainstay of Hatzolah (volunteer medical squad) of Boston. He was the most experienced of the crew. He grabbed his medical

kit, and ran back into the house. He saw at once that Mrs. Silver was barely breathing. Her neck muscles had become paralyzed and her tongue, which had fallen back, was not allowing her to breathe. Dov quickly opened up an air passage and got her to resume breathing. He saved her life!

A few days later when Dov visited Mrs. Silver in the hospital she said to him, "*I thought I was the one giving you one more chance, but I realize now, that it was you who gave me one more chance - at life.*"

And it happened because Mrs. Silver understood that in the interest of harmony, a Jew should always give another Jew -one more chance. (Echoes of the Maggid, p.103 R. Paysach Krohn) **Good Shabbos Everyone.**