



Torah Reflections on *Parashat Ekev* Deuteronomy 7:12 - 11:25

23 Av 5775

August 8, 2015

In the middle of Moses' monologue before the Israelites in this week's Torah reading, the aging prophet reminds the assembly of a shameful incident. He recalls (Deuteronomy 9:11-12): at the very moment God was turning the stone tablets over to Moses atop Mt. Sinai, the Israelites had begun worshipping a golden calf at the base of the mountain. A few weeks after being shepherded out of Egypt, the anxious community lost faith in its spiritual promise and began to stray from its covenant with God.

Moses notes that at this pivotal moment in their journey, the Israelites were on the verge of self-destruction. However, God turns toward the chastened community and offers a second chance—Moses is instructed to carve and inscribe a new set of stone tablets and bring them into the camp as a sign of the covenant which is to be perpetuated between God and the People.

What a powerful image to preserve and carry within our sacred scriptures! Even after our ancestors humiliated themselves so profoundly, they are given the opportunity to reconnect with God and with their future. At the same time, they—and we—are not allowed to forget this critical moment. For it holds many lessons—or at least poses many questions for us—about the limits of our ability to control our world, about humility, about reconciliation and spiritual realignment (*teshuvah*), about how we may carry the legacy of our past misdeeds and acknowledge our brokenness. Elsewhere we learn that the fragments of the first, broken set of tablets—which Moses shattered at the scene of the golden calf—were to be kept in the sacred ark alongside the new set of tablets Moses inscribed when he re-ascended Mt. Sinai. From that time on, the Israelites preserved—in the heart of camp—a physical reminder of its most difficult day together with the record of its enduring covenant.

Now may be a fruitful time to reflect on a significant place of brokenness or regret in your life, and also to reflect on the enduring covenant or commitments you keep. As we look into our hearts or share with a companion in this sacred work, may we find renewed purpose, comfort, and blessing.

© Bay Area Jewish Healing Center, Rabbi Natan Fenner



This Torah Reflection was written by Rabbi Natan Fenner, BCC, of the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center. Bay Area Jewish Healing Center is a beneficiary of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties. Other healing-related resources can be found at www.JewishHealingCenter.org.

The Bay Area Jewish Healing Center provides Jewish spiritual care for people coping with illness, loss and dying, regardless of affiliation or ability to pay. Our services include:

- Rabbinic care, chaplaincy, counseling and spiritual direction—at home or in hospitals, hospices, nursing homes or other care facilities
- Spiritual support groups for patients, caregivers, and the bereaved
- Healing and memorial services, and specialized rituals

Whether through prayer, study materials, or simply a listening presence, the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center is here to support you during difficult times.
