

Knesset Israel

Your Beverlywood Shul

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Please join us for special Seudah Shlishit, sponsored by Aryeh and Judy Goldberg in Memory of Aryeh's mother, Menucha Raitza bas Shlomo HaLevi, on the occasion of her 11th yahrtzeit.

Parshat Ki Tisa

By Rabbi Avraham Schefres

Robert Plant spent much of the '70s answering questions about the lyrics he wrote for "Stairway To Heaven." When asked why the song was so popular, he said it could be its "abstraction," adding, "Depending on what day it is, I still interpret the song a different way - and I wrote the lyrics." The lyrics take some pretty wild turns, but the beginning of the song is about a woman who accumulates money, only to find out the hard way her life had no meaning and will not get her into heaven. This is the only part Plant would really explain, as he said it was "a woman getting everything she wanted without giving anything back." The song is sung by Led Zeppelin and the lyrics he is referring to are "There's a lady who's sure all that glitters is gold and she's buying a stairway to heaven." Finding a stairway to heaven is sought after by everyone. How can we do that?

We learn in *parashat Ki Tisa* that in order to construct and maintain the *Mishkan*, a half-shekel was collected from each Jew. The *pasuk* tells us that "The rich shall give no more, and the poor shall give no less than half a shekel, with which to give offering to Hashem, to atone for your souls" (*Shemot* 30:15). *Chizkuni* explains that every person had to give equivalent amounts to ensure an accurate census of *Bnei Yisrael*. The *Ibn Ezra*, however, explains this giving to be 'a ransom for the contributor's soul' (*Ibid* 30:12). The amount is only a half of a shekel so it seems to be a token amount for 'ransom' of a soul. What is the message here? The message is that *Bnei Yisrael*, for the sake of their soul, need to be deserving of their way in this world. We receive so much from Hashem on a daily basis so it makes sense to try and earn some of that goodness. This is the concept of 'bread of shame' in Judaism that depicts the feeling one has when receiving something that they have not earned through action of mitzvot. One example of this 'bread of shame' in which Hashem performed underserving miracles for *Bnei Yisrael* is the crossing of the Reed Sea. Moshe raised his hands in prayer and Hashem said enough! Your prayers are answered! However now you need to put some action into it (*Sota* 37a)! *Nachshon Ben Aminadav* from the tribe of *Yehudah* subsequently entered the water – an action of *emunah*, faith. As the water touched his neck, the sea split (*Shemot Rabba* 21:10 & *Sota* 37b). Our job here is to take action, do things, so our soul can grow and earn its way in this world in preparation for *Olam Habah*, the next world. Even the beautiful *Gan Eden*, the Garden of Eden, required

some effort on part of man as we learn that "Hashem took man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to guard it" (*Beraishit* 2:15).

How do we earn *Olam Habah*? By understanding that we must earn our way in this world by not just receiving, but through our actions.

Although the requirement of giving the half shekel is for men over the age of 20, the lesson of this particular giving is for every person. In fact, just as the song above is about a lady who knows that she needs to buy a stairway to heaven, we have our own song about a lady that teaches us this concept. The song is *Eishet Chail* and in the words of *Shlomo Hamelech* - "She watches over the affairs of her household and **does not eat the bread of idleness**" (*Mishlei* 31: 27). In other words, an *eshet chayil* earns the grace of Hashem upon her family through her action of mitzvot. This beautiful song is about every *Eishet Chail B'Yisrael* who is actively involved in her household by giving back and buying a stairway to heaven. Keep investing in your stairway into *Olam Habah*. See you in shul.

Shabbat Times

Erev Shabbat Feb 26, 2016 / 17 Adar, 5776

Candle Lighting.....4:37 pm to 5:29 pm
Mincha.....5:35 pm

Shabbat Day Feb 27, 2016 / 18 Adar, 5776

Shacharit.....9:00 am
Kiddush.....11:30 am
Mincha.....5:15 pm

Seudat Shlishit sponsored by:

- **Aryeh and Judy Goldberg** in honor of the 11th yahrtzeit of Aryeh's mother, Menucha Raitza bas Shlomo

Havdalah / Shabbat Ends.....6:30 pm

Mazal Tov!

Mazal Tov to Derek & Bat-Sheva Okrent and the entire famiy on the birth of a grandson, born to Karen & Jeremy Bernstein!

Happy Birthday Ezra Amsterdam! (Feb 26)

Happy Birthday Helen Brill! (Mar 1)