

# Parsha Ponders

Ki Sisa | March 12, 2020 | 17 Adar 5780

## *Invader assurances*<sup>1</sup>

שלש פעמים בשנה יראה כל-זכורך את-פני האדן יקוק וגו' ולא-יחמד איש את-ארצך בעלתך לראות וגו'  
Three times a year, all of your men shall be seen by the countenance of the L-rd, Hashem...no man will covet your land when you go up to be seen<sup>2</sup>

One of the *mitzvos* of the Torah is known as *aliya leregel*<sup>3</sup>. Three times a year, there's a *mitzvah* for all men to make a pilgrimage to the Temple. These three times occur on Passover, Shavuos, and Sukkos. By appearing in the Temple, the Jewish men are so-to-speak being "seen" by G-d. One could be nervous keeping such a *mitzvah*. If all the men converge towards Jerusalem, who will guard the borders? Who will protect their homes from invasion? To curb these concerns, the Torah promises us that at the times of the pilgrimage, no one will covet our land. There will be no need to fear foreign invasions.

This isn't the first time the *mitzvah* of *aliya leregel* is mentioned. In *parshas Mishpatim*, the Torah commands<sup>4</sup> the *mitzvah* in a very similar way to this week's *parsha*. שלש פעמים בשנה יראה כל-זכורך יקוק אל-פני האדן יקוק. All of your means shall be seen to the countenance of the L-rd, Hashem. However, that is all that is written. No promises. No guarantees. Why is it that in this week's *parsha* there's such a promise of border safety, whereas earlier in the Torah there is no such thing?

Earlier in this week's *parsha*, the Torah describes<sup>5</sup> the infamous episode of the sin of the Golden Calf. As Moshe descended from Mount Sinai, holding the two tablets written by G-d Himself, he witnessed the horrible scene. The Jews had made a Golden Calf as their idol, and were busy serving and worshipping it. In fury, Moshe smashed the tablets before their eyes. The Jews repented, and their sin was eventually forgiven. Moshe came down on Yom Kippur with a second set of tablets, which were to replace the first. Were there any lasting consequences to this sin?

*Chazal* tell us that indeed there were tremendous consequences. When the Jews first received the Torah, along with the first tablets, they were on such a high level that they were free from all of life's difficulties<sup>6</sup>. There was no longer such as forgetting one's learning<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, no nation could ever have had dominion over the Jewish people<sup>8</sup>. When the Jews sinned with the Golden Calf, and Moshe smashed the tablets, they lost all of these qualities. They reverted to the way they were before receiving the Torah.

If so, *aliya leregel's* new promise makes sense. In *parshas Mishpatim*, the Jews hadn't yet sinned with the Golden Calf. There was no need for promises against foreign invaders, as they were assured anyways of peace and tranquility. Only once they sinned, and were regular humans, would there be such a concern. To ensure they make the trip to Jerusalem three times a year without worry, Hashem promised them that regardless of their stature, they need not fear foreign invaders. Good Shabbos

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Meshech Chochmah to Exodus 34:23,24

<sup>2</sup> Exodus *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Sefer HaMitzvos Aseh § 54; Sefer HaChinuch § 489; Semag Asin § 228

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 23:17

<sup>5</sup> Ibid Chapter 32

<sup>6</sup> Shemos Rabbah 41:7. It also says they were free from death and exile

<sup>7</sup> Eruvin 54a

<sup>8</sup> Ibid