

Adonai's 13

“Then Adonai passed before him, and proclaimed, “Adonai, Adonai, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth, ⁷showing mercy to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means leaving the guilty unpunished, but bringing the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, to the third and fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6-7).

As we explore *Parashah Ki Tisa*, we see how *Adonai*, Israel’s Husband, handles His unfaithful and wayward spouse. This is an industrious portion, detailing for us things for their joint dwelling, *Bezalel* (the artist chosen to create His home furnishings), the setting of a weekly date (*Shabbat*), the incident of unfaithfulness (the golden calf), the interceding by Moses and finally the revelation of thirteen-character qualities of the Almighty. In the end not only does *Moses’s* face shine, but we also discern the shining face of *Adonai*, Faithful Husband, who loves His wife (His people) perfectly and forgives her (them).

What an exciting mountain top experience! Meanwhile, down in the valley, the children of Israel had become extremely impatient. The people saw that Moses had delayed in descending the mountain, and the people gathered around Aaron and said to him, “...*Get up, make us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what’s become of him!*” (*Exodus 32:1*) In descending from the mountain, Moses had to go from the *sublime* to the *ridiculous*, from the *heights of fellowship* with *Adonai*, to the *depths of idolatry* with his wayward people. They were clearly guilty of this grievous sin and worthy of death. But *Adonai* heeds Moses's intercession and spares their lives.

This whole incident was a very traumatic event for the young bride nation. The ramifications would affect Israel's history for years to come. A proper conclusion to this whole affair was important for both *Adonai* and Israel. It was as if this young, newly married couple had their first serious marriage difficulty, a one-sided and grievous one. There will be a need to take the necessary precautions to prohibit it ever happening again. But further, the closeness and intimacy prior to this event will need to be completely restored. The main difference between this marriage difficulty and human ones is that the contributing factor in this one was completely one-sided. Israel was clearly 100% at fault. Sad to say that this new bride had already begun to demonstrate a problem which would seriously damage this divine marriage throughout all of their years together – the problem of marital unfaithfulness. It will take millennia to root this sin out, but *Adonai*, the faithful Husband, promised His eternal love for His covenant people. Eventually, when *Messiah* returns, *Adonai* will have so worked in Israel that He will come and find a completely pure, dressed in fine linen Bride (see *Rev. 19:4-9*).

The steps of reconciliation are detailed in this *Parasha*. They are: (1) Testing the Leader (*Exodus 32:7-14*), (2) Terminating the Troublemakers (*Exodus 32:26-35*), (3) Face-to-face Communication in the Tent (*Exodus 33:7-11*), and (4) Teaching the Remnant (*Exodus 34:5-7*).

This final phase of restoration will only come when Israel truly understands and believes that *Adonai* is who He is (*I AM Adonai* is the First Commandment). A magnificent revelation of *Adonai’s* character was in order. This would let them know how different *Adonai* is from the god they made out of gold. Also, this revelation helped them to know the extent of forgiveness that *Adonai* granted to those who truly repent. And it taught Israel the truth about *Adonai* so they could grow in their appreciation of Him. Finally, this passage provides the basis upon which they will, one day, recognize the *Messiah*.

In Chapter 34 the Lord did just as He said and showed Moses a part of Him that up to this moment was unrevealed. In doing so, Moses gets a glimpse at some of the most profound details of the *Character of Adonai*. The content of these verses are known in Judaism as the *Thirteen Attributes of God*. BTW, look

at the emphasis in the key verse (*Exodus 34:6*). Whenever *Adonai* is repeated twice in the same text, it always refers to His dual nature of justice and mercy.

1. The first attribute is the word *Adonai* [*YHVH*]. This means that He Himself is a covenant keeping Sovereign. By His own nature, He is the forgiving *One & Only* and is merciful even before a man sins. *Adonai's* forgiving nature did not develop in reaction to man's sin. He was merciful before man ever sinned.
2. *YHVH* [*Adonai*] is then repeated in the text. This repetition emphasizes *Adonai's* unchanging character. *Adonai* is always merciful even after a person has sinned and repented. Man's sin does not change His nature.
3. [*EL*] is mentioned next. This lets us know that He is the creator and as Creator He has the right to show mercy. He is *All-Powerful* and *does not need to prove that aspect by being cruel*. He shows His true power through His mercy to provide to all creatures according to their need.
4. He is merciful [*RACHAM*]. He is so compassionate that He even loves a child in the womb. So loving is He that He doesn't even want you to be distressed.
5. He is gracious [*CHANAN*]. *Adonai* showers the undeserving with favor and grace. If you are already in distress, He, in his mercy, will alleviate your distress.
6. He is longsuffering [*EREK APAYIM*]. *Adonai* is slow to anger; He waits patiently for you to repent.
7. He is abundant in goodness [*RAV CHESED*]. *Adonai* is good to the righteous, kind to all believers, and is plentiful and abundant beyond all measure.
8. He is abundant in truth [*EMET*]. *Adonai* is good even after He has scrutinized your life; He already knows exactly how to fix what is wrong. He is fair to all, and He is equitable.
9. He keeps mercy for thousands [*NOTZEIR CHESED L'ALFIM*]. *Adonai's* kindness will extend to your children and to all generations. His devotion to your salvation is boundless. It is true for all of us.
10. He forgives iniquity [*NOSEI AVON*]. *Adonai* forgives intentional sins; He forgives willful sins.
11. He forgives transgression [*NOSEI PESHA*]. He forgives rebellious sins committed in defiance to his will. He forgives sins of self-will.
12. He forgives sin [*NOSEI CHATAH*]. He forgives sins of ignorance, inadvertent or without knowing sins.

The *Thirteen Attributes of Adonai* all relate to mercy and forgiveness. We should always *pray and thank* Him for His mercy and forgiveness He shows us and helps us demonstrate these same attributes to people in our lives – but only *if we are willing*. An important thing about the attributes of *Adonai* is that they only activate if *we give them away: Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy*. Let us *Pass it Forward (tikkun olam, Hebrew for repairing the world)*. When you give one of His attributes to someone else, it comes back to you, e.g., *If you forgive, then you shall be forgiven*. So, take *Adonai's 13* and begin to live by them; give them to those you come in contact with. Share them, and you will see these same attributes manifested in your own walk with Him. *Ken yehi ratzon* – may this be His will for us! I know it is! *Shabbat Shalom!*