



## Wembley Synagogue

כי תשא

### Insights from the commentators into the Sedra of Ki Tissa

כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל לפקדיהם - When you calculate the heads of the Children of Israel according to their numbers (then each man shall give atonement for his soul to G-d when they are counted, and there shall not be a plague when they are counted) (30:12). The Baal Haturim points out that the word וְנָתְנוּ "then they shall give," is a palindrome, reading the same way forwards and backwards. This is to teach us that whatever a person gives to charity eventually comes back. Ultimately, there is no cost to giving charity, only gain.

The Baal Haturim also points out that the gematriya (numerical value of) initial letters of the words **כי תשא את ראש בני** i.e. כ ת א ר ב = 603. This is the same number of thousands counted in this census. The gematriya of **בני ישראל** (Bnei Yisrael – Children of Israel) is also 603

כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל לפקדיהם - When you calculate the heads of the Children of Israel according to their numbers (30:12). The Torah uses the figure of speech "raise the head of" to refer to the act of counting the Jewish people. This indicates that the counting raised the status of the Jews. It symbolised that each Jew is not only an individual acting for himself, but is counted as an integral part of the whole group as well. Each person can accomplish more within the framework of a community. Being included in a group is therefore an enhancement to a person's standing. (Source: Avnei Azel)

זֶה יָתְנוּ כָּל הָעֶבֶר עַל הַפְּקֻדִים מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל - This shall they give - everyone who passes through the census - a half shekel. (30:13)

The nation was commanded that every male Jew was to give a half-shekel donation each year. When the Temple was standing, this money was used for the maintenance of Korbanot Tzibbur - public sacrificial service. The half-shekel was chosen, as opposed to a whole unit, to imply that every Jew is incomplete as an individual. It is only when he joins together with another Jew that he becomes a whole and fully functional member of the community.

The Mishnah in Mesechet Shekalim 1:1 says: On the first day of Adar, announcements are made concerning the donation of the Shekalim and concerning Kilayim, crops that are mixed in a forbidden manner. Is there some connection between these two seemingly disparate matters? At first glance, Shekalim and Kilayim are two divergent issues. Why does the Mishnah juxtapose them?

Harav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, ztl, explains that, as mentioned above, a person must strive to cultivate relationships. As it says in Pirkei Avot 1:6 "Acquire for yourself a friend." One who lives as an individual lives as an incomplete person -he is missing a part of himself. Nonetheless, one must maintain criteria with regard to his relationships. He must be sure to associate only with those people who are appropriate. Just as certain mixtures of crops are forbidden, so, too, is it unwise to develop an affiliation with people of questionable or incompatible character. The positive effect of a good friend - and, conversely, the negative effect of a bad friend - cannot be emphasised enough. (Source: Peninim on the Torah)

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּם עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים - (And the people gathered around Aharon) and said to him, "Rise up, make for us gods." (32:1) How could Aharon and the Jewish people make a Golden Calf so soon after the Torah had been given and after they had witnessed Hashem's miracles?

According to Saadia Gaon, Aharon wanted to test the Jewish people to see if they would actually worship idols, so he pretended to go along with their plan. Nevertheless, since he did not execute the idol worshippers immediately when they stumbled, Hashem became angry with Aharon too.

*Ibn Ezra* says that the Jewish people did not intend to worship idols. Rather, in Moshe's absence, they were seeking a concrete form of Divine Service. The calf was thus intended to be an object through which they worshipped G-d, as Aharon said explicitly, "Tomorrow should be a festival to G-d" (v.5)

The Ramban says that the Jewish people had not intended to worship idols. Rather, since Moshe had disappeared, they sought a replacement for him to guide them in serving G-d.

*Da'at Zekeinim* says that the Jewish people were split into three groups – those who were merely looking for a new leader, those who wished to worship idols and the Tribe of Levi, who remained totally loyal to Hashem (v.26)

בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁשִׁי - That Moshe had delayed (in descending) (32:1) בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁשִׁי can be read as בַּ שֵׁשׁ - "the sixth (hour) came." According to the Gemara Shabbat 89a, Moshe told the people he would be away for forty days, adding that he would return within the first six hours of the fortieth day. Rashi points out that there was a misunderstanding concerning when the count of forty days was to begin. The people began counting on the day Moshe ascended the mountain. Thus, when the sixth hour of the fortieth day had passed, the people became apprehensive. Moshe, however, considered that day to be only the thirty-ninth day.

The Jewish people's inability to wait – their lack of patience for even a few moments – their unwillingness to give Moshe the benefit of the doubt, led to the grave sin of the Golden Calf. The rabbis say that impetuosity always has severe consequences. (Source: Peninim on the Torah )

וַיַּעֲשׂוּהוּ עֵגֶל מְסֻכָּה - They fashioned it into a molten calf. (They said, "This is your G-d, O' Yisrael, which brought you up from the Land of Egypt.") (32:4) When we examine the incident of the Golden-Calf, we see that only three-thousand Jews actually sinned. In fact, these sinners were members of the *eirav rav*, mixed multitude, who came along with the Israelites when they left Egypt. Yet, the entire nation carried the burden of guilt. Why? For example, the Tribe of Levi, who was not involved in the sin at all, was included in this collective guilt. This occurred again later on when the spies returned from their mission in Eretz Yisrael, and ten of them gave their false report. Hashem wanted to destroy the nation and rebuild it through Moshe Rabbeinu. Once again, the proportion of guilt seems disproportionate. There is yet a more glaring episode in Tanach when one man, Achan, took from the spoils of Jericho, and all of Israel was held responsible. Why? In his commentary to the Book of Joshua, the Malbim writes that all Israel is considered as one body. So, he says, just as if there is an infection in one organ it can affect the entire body, so, too, if one Jew sins, it is viewed collectively and the guilt is shared by everyone. Nobody sins in a vacuum. His transgression leaves a lasting blemish on the nation. This is the dynamics of a community. Each individual affects the entire unit.

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר קָרַב אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה - And it came to pass as soon as he drew near the camp (and he saw the calf and the dancing and Moshe's anger flared up. He cast the tablets from his hands...) (32:19)

On Mount Sinai Moshe had already been informed by Hashem that the Jews in the camp below had made a Golden Calf to worship as their god. Why, then, should the sight of the Calf have made Moshe react so angrily?

When he had first learned the news, Moshe still hoped that he would succeed in bringing the people to repent so that he would be able to give them the Tablets. But when he actually witnessed the Jewish people dancing around their idol rejoicing in their sin, he despaired of ever being able to make them mend their ways so that they could receive the Luchot (Tablets) again, and "he cast the tablets from his hands." (Source: Sforno quoted in Ma'ayna Shel Torah)

## Shabbat Shalom!



**Shabbat starts 5.40pm**



**Shabbat ends: 6.43pm**

The *Insights into the Sedra* sheet is edited by Chazan Anthony Wolfson  
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