

**Wembley Synagogue**

כ"י תשפ"א

Insights from the commentators into the Sedra of Ki Tissa 5768**What's the Sidra about?**

1st Aliya: This first Aliya concludes the details of the Mishkan's construction. Bnei Yisrael are commanded to give the half Shekel toward a national census and the purchasing of the public offerings. The copper washstand -the Kiyor, is described along with the ingredients and laws of the anointing oil and the Ketoret - the incense. Betzallel, the son of Chur and grandson of Miriam is identified as the chief artisan and architect of the Mishkan. (Note: he was only 13 years old!) The Mitzvah of Shabbat is commanded. Its juxtaposition to the details of the Mishkan provides the Gemara with the source for determining the 39 categories of Melacha prohibited on Shabbat.

2nd Aliya: The story of the Golden Calf is told. Moshe ascended Sinai on the morning of Sivan 7, and remained 40 days and nights. The 7th didn't start with a night, so it wasn't included in the total of 40. The Jews mistakenly assumed that it was to be included and expected Moshe back on the morning of Tamuz 16. Instead, he returned the morning of Tamuz 17. By midday of the 16th, the Jews were already desperate. Chur attempts to reason with them and is killed. They approach Aharon who attempts to redirect their terror which results in the Golden Calf. Moshe appears the next morning, breaks the Luchot, marshals the tribe of Levi, and 3000 people are killed. Moshe demands Hashem's forgiveness for the people, but moves the Ohel Moed out from the midst of the camp. Yehoshua is proclaimed the main student of Moshe.

3rd & 4th Aliyot: Moshe requests to understand Hashem's system of justice. He is granted a greater understanding of Hashem than any other person in history, but is denied the ability to comprehend divine justice.

5th Aliya: Moshe is instructed to cut two new Luchot and ascend Sinai. Moshe is taught the secret formula for Teshuva (the Thirteen Names of G-d as He Manifests His Mercy) (34:6) and G-d forgives Bnei Yisrael.

6th Aliya: Hashem establishes a new covenant with the people. He forewarns them against the influences of assimilation and intermarriage and forbids them to make any treaties with the inhabitants of Canaan. The holidays of Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot are reviewed, as well as Shabbat and the basic law of Kashrut.

7th Aliya: Moshe remains on Sinai another 40 days and nights and returns on Yom Kippur carrying the second Luchot. The people see that the very being of Moshe had been transformed and that his face radiated with an inner light. Moshe fashions for himself a veil that he would wear at all times, except when receiving a prophecy and when transmitting the word of G-d to the people. (Source: Rav Aron Tendler)

וְלֹא־יְהִיָּה בָהֶם נֶגֶף בַּפְּקֹדֹת אֲתֶם . . . *so that there will not be a plague among them (30:2)* Why does the verse change from singular ("Every man shall give") to plural ("so that there will not be a plague among them")? R' Yaakov Yechizkiyahu Gruenwald z"l explains: Our Sages teach that when one person repents, the entire world achieves a certain degree of atonement on his account. Thus, even one person's charity can avert a plague that could have affected multitudes. (Source: Vayagged Yaakov: Parashat Shekalim)

וְהָיָה יְתֵנוּ בְּלִי־הַעֲבֹר עַל־הַפְּקֹדִים מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל הַשְּׂקָל הַקֹּדֶשׁ - *This shall they give - everyone who passes through the census - a half shekel of the sacred shekel(30:13)*

Why half a shekel? R' Eliyahu Hakohen z"l offers the following ideas:

- I. Only the men participated in the sin of the golden calf, not the women. The Zohar says that a man without a wife is only half a person. Thus, only half an atonement is required.
- II. The Gemara teaches that G-d forgave only half the sin of the golden calf. For the remaining half, He exacts retribution from each generation a little bit at a time. This is symbolised by the half-shekel.
- III. Bringing only a half-shekel reminds a person that one cannot grow spiritually unless he also raises the spiritual level of those around him.

IV. The leaders behind the making of the golden calf were in fact from the erev rav, other nationalities that were hangers-on to the Jewish People. Bnei Yisrael's sin was in not preventing this occurrence. This is a lesser sin; thus, only a lesser atonement consisting of a half-shekel was required. (Source: Aggadot Eliyahu: Shekalim Ch.2)

וַיַּרְא הָעָם כִּי־בָשַׁשׁ מֹשֶׁה לְרִדְתָּ מִן־הַר... כִּי־יָרָד מֹשֶׁה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלֵנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֹא יָרַעֵנוּ מִהֲיָתָה לוֹ
 The people saw that Moshe had delayed in descending the mountain, and the people gathered around Aharon and said to him, `Rise up, make for us gods that will go before us, for this man Moshe who brought us up from the land of Egypt -- we do not know what became of him! (32:1)

R' Yaakov Charlap z"l explains how Bnei Yisrael came to commit the terrible sin of trying to replace Moshe Rabbeinu. He writes: Even before Moshe ascended to Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael saw him as half man and half angel. Then he was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights, not eating and not drinking. Bnei Yisrael said, "We can not relate to a leader who has become super-human, who has become an angel." This is the meaning of their statement: "For this man Moshe -- we do not know what became of him!" (Source: Mei Marom: Nimukei Mikraot)

וַיִּפֶן וַיֵּרֵד מֹשֶׁה מִן־הָהָר וּשְׁנֵי לַחַת הַתְּעֻדָה בְּיָדוֹ - *Moshe turned and descended from the mountain, and the two Tablets of Testimony were in his hand (32:15)*

The Rambam (Bet Habechira 7:4) writes that when a Kohen completes his work in the Bet Hamikdash and leaves, he is prohibited to leave with his back facing the Bet Hamikdash. Rather, he is required to walk out backwards, out of deference to the Presence of Hashem that is found in the Bet Hamikdash. This law can explain why Moshe "turned" as he descended. Hashem's Presence was on Har Sinai and required the same respect as the Bet Hamikdash. Therefore Moshe walked down the mountain in a "turned fashion", i.e. with his body facing the mountain. However, this explanation seems to be contradicted from another passuk. Earlier in the Sidra of Yitro (Shemot 19:14), after mentioning that Hashem spoke to Moshe on Har Sinai, the Torah writes that "Moshe descended from the mountain to go to the people," without mentioning that he "turned" as he descended. There too he was leaving Hashem's Presence and should have walked backwards as a sign of respect.

The solution to this lies in a careful reading of the words of the Rambam mentioned earlier. The Rambam prefaces his words by writing "when a Kohen completes his work." The requirement to walk backwards only applies after a Kohen has completed his services and is leaving for the day. Similarly, Moshe was only obligated to walk backwards after totally finishing his discussion with Hashem. The episode in the Sidra of Yitro took place before the giving of the Torah, and Moshe had not yet finished conversing with Hashem. Therefore he left in a normal manner. Parshat Ki Tissa is describing Moshe's descent after the entire process of giving the Torah was completed. Moshe was taking final leave from Hashem. Thus Moshe left in a respectful manner – facing Hashem as he walked down the mountain. (Source: R' Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, quoted by Shai LeTorah / and Rabbeinu Channanel)

שבת שלום!
Shabbat Shalom!



Shabbat starts: 5.13pm



Shabbat ends: 6.17pm

לע"נ ר' מרדכי צבי ב"ר חיאל משה וולפסון ז"ל Dedicated