



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

PARSHAT KI TISA

The first third of the Parsha concludes instructions concerning the Mishkan. The rest of the Parsha is the story of the Golden Calf, concluding with reconciliation and forgiveness.

The first aliyot are among the longest in the Torah; the first is 44 verses, the second 47. The remaining are among the shortest; 5 aliyot, 48 verses.



1ST ALIYA (30:11-31:17)

All are to give a **half shekel** to be an atonement. The offerings are brought from these funds – and hence, all the people are represented equally as a remembrance and atonement. Make a **wash basin** of copper. Place it outside the Mishkan area, near the altar. The Kohanim must wash their hands and feet before service. Make **spiced anointing oil** to anoint the Mishkan, all its utensils and the Kohanim. This recipe is not to be made for personal body lotions. Make **incense** to place in front of the ark, the place that I will meet you. This incense is holy of holies. It is not to be made for your olfactory pleasure. I have called **Bezalel** and filled him with the Divine spirit to master all means of craftsmanship, in metals and in materials. He, with Ohaliav, will fashion all the things that I have commanded be made for the Mishkan. Keep **Shabbat** as a sign between Me and you for all time, for I am the One who sanctifies you. Do not do any melacha. It is an eternal sign that in six days I made the world and

in the seventh ceased.

This very long aliya allows the entire story of the Golden Calf to be told in the Levi aliya, the second, as the Leviim did not participate in the Golden Calf.

These instructions serve to complete the preparations for the actual building of the Mishkan. The Mishkan endeavour has different parts. The building. The people to run it. Those instructions have been given.

Now we switch to enablers, not the service itself but the facilitators. Money for offerings. Oil to anoint, to inaugurate. Wash basin for daily preparation to serve. And the craftsmen to lead the demanding project of building all these things.

With these final instructions, the construction of the space for the Shechina to dwell in our midst may begin.



2ND ALIYA (31:18-33:11)

While Moshe is on the mountain receiving the luchot, the people below are making a golden calf. G-d tells Moshe that his people have made a golden calf. He wants to destroy them and begin anew with Moshe. Moshe pleads on their behalf. G-d relents. Moshe descends with Divinely inscribed tablets. When he sees the golden calf, he smashes the tablets. Moshe confronts Aharon. Aharon explains what happened. At the behest of Moshe, the Leviim punish the 3,000 guilty. Moshe ascends the mountain. He admits the sin of the people, asking for forgiveness. And if not, remove me from the book. G-d counters that those who sin will be the ones to be erased. Now,

go, led by My angel and lead the people to the Land. For I will not be in your midst lest you be destroyed. The people are distraught. Moshe moves the tent of meeting to outside of the camp, for there G-d will now speak with him. A cloud descended when G-d spoke with Moshe. The people saw and bowed. G-d spoke to Moshe face to face, as people do.

There is a debate when chronologically the story of the Golden Calf occurs. However, either way, there is a chronology as it is recorded in the Torah for a reason.

The creation of a place for the Shechina to dwell in our midst is shattered by the Golden Calf. G-d is telling us He wants to be imminent, to be close to us, to dwell in the Mishkan. And we spit in His face, creating the Golden Calf, turning our backs on Him.

The story of the Golden Calf is rich in many details. However, the primary theme in the flow of the Torah is Divine immanence. How can the plan for the Shechina to dwell in our midst weather this terrible rejection? He wants to be with us. We turn our back.

The story of the Golden Calf takes place in two locations: top of the mountain and bottom of the mountain. The terrible sin of building the Golden Calf occurs at the bottom of the mountain but far more space in the Torah is dedicated to the top of the mountain. 21 verses describe the action taking place down the mountain. 45 verses describe the interaction between G-d and Moshe on the top of the mountain.

The story is not primarily the story of the sin. It is the story of G-d and man. How will this terrible sin damage the story of the Shechina descending, dwelling in our midst? Is that dream lost?

Moshe works hard, because before we can get to the intimacy of the Shechina with man

we have to be forgiven. That is first.

G-d wants to destroy the people and begin anew with Moshe as the forefather.

Moshe pleads: don't do that. He starts before he has even gone down the mountain and seen the Golden Calf. He is successful in at least forbearance; the people will not be destroyed.

After going down, smashing the luchot, he goes back up the mountain. Now, Moshe has a big job. He wants to recover Paradise lost. He wants forgiveness, a return to the Shechina in our midst.

He is not successful. Well, somewhat. The march to the Land of Israel will continue. But the dream of the march with the Shechina in our midst? No. G-d tells Moshe that an angel will lead them. But not with Me in their midst.



3RD ALIYA (33:12-16)

Moshe challenges G-d: If I have found favor in your eyes, tell me Your ways. That way I can act properly, for this is, after all, Your people. G-d: I will guide you. Moshe: Don't move us from here unless Your Face goes with us.

Moshe feels emboldened. The march to the Land will continue. That is such a relief. Forgiveness.

But Moshe presses. We want You. We don't want that angel. We want Your Face in our midst.

This is an echo of Mt. Sinai. At Sinai G-d proposed to speak to Moshe and the people would overhear. The people said no way. We all want to hear His Voice. And G-d accepted that and spoke to all the people

Moshe thinks: He wants us. He acquiesced at Sinai to our desire to hear His Voice. He wants to be in our midst. I'll push harder. Not the angel. We want You.



4TH ALIYA (33:17-23)

G-d: I will do as you say. Moshe: show me Your kavod, Your glory. G-d: I will pass before you, will call My name before you, show mercy to whom I choose to show mercy to. You cannot see My face and survive. Stand in the nook in the rock; I will pass in front of you. You will see My back but My face you will not see.

G-d acquiesces to Moshe's demand for closeness. To a point. Moshe wants Your Face. I want Your fullness, Your glory. G-d does not back off. I will reveal but with limits: glimpses from behind need suffice.

Moshe wants the Face. He gets the back of the head. This allegory is the answer to Moshe's desire to know G-d's Ways. I Will Be in your midst, He says, but you are going to have to live with seeing the back of my head. Man can never fathom the Divine.

This exchange is what we all sense in the challenge of this world. We see the Divine, but we don't. We perceive, but from behind. We want a peek but must live without.



5TH ALIYA (34:1-9)

G-d instructs Moshe to make a second set of tablets. Moshe ascends the mountain by himself. G-d descends in a cloud and he calls: G-d, G-d, Merciful... the 13 attributes of mercy. Moshe bows. And says: please be in our midst, for though the people are obstinate, forgive their sins.

The return to Paradise lost, the return to

**May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be אמי מורת' לע"נ**

Helen Winkler a"h
חיה אסתר בת ישראל משה ע"ה
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the rarefied relationship of G-d's wanting to be close to man continues. Replace the broken tablets. Our closeness is returning. For I, says G-d, am forgiving, full of mercy.

Moshe, appreciative of the forgiveness, pushes again. Be in our midst.



6TH ALIYA (34:10-26)

G-d responded: I am making a covenant. You will see signs and wonders, G-d's work that is awesome. You keep what I command. Don't make a pact with the people in the Land, for it will lead to you worshipping idols, and to marriage with them. Keep our festivals, our Shabbat, our laws in our Temple.

The response to Moshe's pleading that He be in our midst? Ok. But you need to do your part. The march to the Land of Israel continues. We are back to where we were before the sin. But. Don't do that again. I Will Be Loyal to you, but you need to be loyal to Me. No idols. Come be with Me on Shabbat and holidays. Holy days of You and me. Come greet Me in My Home, the Temple. I Will be with you; you be with Me.



7TH ALIYA (34:27-35)

Moshe was in the mountain 40 days, writing the second set of the 10 commandments. As he descended with the tablets, his face shone. The people were afraid of him. Moshe instructed them in all that G-d spoke with him on the mountain. Moshe covered his face when he was with the people, uncovering it when G-d spoke with him.

This most intense of parshas ends with an even more sublime image. Moshe's face is shining. The people are afraid. Just like at Sinai. We want to hear His Voice. But it is overwhelming. Here too. Moshe shines with the intensity of his encounter with G-d. But needing to cover it, for as much as we want the Divine, the encounter is overwhelming.

STATS

HAFTORAH PARSHAT PARAH
YEchezkel 36:16-36

21st of 54 sedras; 9th of 11 in Shemot. Written on 245.17 lines in a Torah (8th).

14 Parshiot; 10 open, 4 closed.

139 pesukim (10th), 1st in Shemot.

2002 words (5th), 1st in Shemot.

7424 letters (8th), 1st in Shemot.

Large sedra in general plus relatively long pesukim, which explains the jump in rank from 10th for pesukim to 5th for words. Only 4 other sedra have more than 2000 words.

This week we read a special *haftorah* which follows the theme of this week's additional Torah portion of *Parshat Parah* which speaks of the power of the 'Red Heifer' to purify.

We find in the *haftorah* the mention of "purifying waters" that are sprinkled upon the people of Israel with the coming of the Mashiach.

Hashem will take the people of Israel out of exile, not necessarily as a response to their meritorious deeds or acts of *teshuvah*, but as a result of Hashem's commitment to return them to their borders. Hashem will bring the Israelites back to the Holy Land and purify them with the waters of the Red Heifer. The people of Israel will then feel ashamed of their misdeeds and this reality will bring about a process of purification. Hashem will bestow prosperity and bounty upon the Land.

The following passage is one of the most memorable in the *haftorah* which describes an elevated and comforting vision of Eretz Yisrael: "This Land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden, and the cities that were destroyed and desolate and pulled down have become settled as fortified cities." ■

MITZVOT

9 mitzvot; 4 positives, 5 prohibitions
9 doesn't seem like very many mitzvot, but only 17 of the other 53 sedras (less than a third) have more mitzvot.

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