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כִּי תִשָּׂא
Ki Tissa

DeVAsH

ט"ז - כ"ב אֲדָר א תשפ"ד February 25 - March 2, 2024



מָה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- God tells Moshe how to count בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (Benei Yisrael, the Israelites). People must contribute a half-shekel coin for the מִשְׁכָּן (Mishkan, sanctuary for God).
- God gives instructions for more parts of the mishkan: a כִּיּוֹר (kiyyor, basin for washing), שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה (shemen ha-mish'hah, anointing oil), and the קְטֹרֶת הַסַּמִּים (ketoret ha-sammim, incense).
- Benei Yisrael worry when Moshe takes a long time to come down from הַר סִינַי (Har Sinai, Mount Sinai). They ask Aharon to make them an אֱלֹהִים (elohim, idol or ruler) to lead them. Aharon collects their jewelry and creates a golden עֵגֶל (eigel, calf).
- God wants to destroy Benei Yisrael, but Moshe pleads for their lives.
- Moshe comes down from Har Sinai carrying the לֻחוֹת (luhot, tablets). Moshe sees what's going on, shatters the luhot, and destroys the eigel.
- God tells Moshe to carve a new set of luhot and to go back up Har Sinai, and Moshe is there for a second set of 40 days and 40 nights. When Moshe comes down, his face is glowing. He teaches the Torah to Benei Yisrael.



פֵּרוּשִׁים • Commentary

Was Aharon responsible for the חֵטְא הָעֵגֶל (heit ha-eigel, sin of the golden calf)?

Rashi presents two different perspectives on this question!

1

In a number of his comments on Shemot 32, Rashi describes Aharon trying to do everything he could to prevent Benei Yisrael from sinning.



For example, Rashi says that when Aharon told Benei Yisrael to gather jewelry, he was actually trying to stall them. He hoped that people wouldn't want to donate jewelry, that it would take a long time to collect, and that Moshe would return before anything bad could happen (Rashi on Shemot 32:2).

Here's how Rashi explains the pasuk about Aharon building a מִזְבֵּחַ (mizbe'ah, altar) and announcing a festival the next day (Shemot 32:5):

Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

"He (Aharon) built an altar"—to delay them.

"Tomorrow will be a festival of God"—Aharon said "tomorrow" and not "today," because he hoped that Moshe would return before the people started to worship the eigel.

רש"י

"וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ"—לְדְחוֹתָם.

"וַיֹּאמַר חַג לַה' מָחָר"—וְלֹא הַיּוֹם, שֶׁמָּא יָבֹא מֹשֶׁה קֹדֶם שֶׁיַּעַבְדוּהוּ.

2

In Parashat Shemini, we read about the grand opening of the מִשְׁכָּן (Mishkan, sanctuary for God). It includes a dramatic moment when Aharon is waiting for God's presence to fill the Mishkan (Vayikra 9:23). Rashi describes Aharon's feelings in this moment:

Rashi on Vayikra 9:23

When Aharon saw that all the sacrifices had been offered and everything was done, but the Shekhinah had still not come down for Israel, he was sad and said: I know that the Holy Blessed One is angry with me (for my role in the heit ha-eigel) and it's because of me that the Shekhinah has not come down for Israel....

רש"י ויקרא ט:בג

כֵּיוָן שֶׁרָאָה אַהֲרֹן שֶׁקָּרְבוּ כָּל הַקָּרְבָּנוֹת וְנַעֲשׂוּ כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים וְלֹא יָרְדָה שְׁכִינָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, הָיָה מִצְטַעֵר וְאוֹמֵר: יוֹדֵעַ אֲנִי שֶׁכָּעַס הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא עָלַי וּבִשְׁבִילִי לֹא יָרְדָה שְׁכִינָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל....

Rashi is quoting a midrash which describes Aharon admitting that he was responsible for the heit ha-eigel.

- When you read the story in Shemot 32, what do you think of Aharon's actions?
- Can you find evidence for both interpretations in Rashi? How can both be true?
- What would you have done if you were in Aharon's place?
- Can you think of a time you had good intentions, but you were still responsible for a bad outcome?





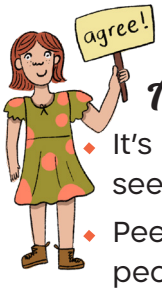
דַּקָּה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

Debate: I can understand why Benei Yisrael might have been tempted to worship an idol.

How to play:

- Here are some arguments to get you started, but try to come up with your own. Then debate someone!
- For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.





Agree!

- It's hard to worship a God you never see.
- Peer pressure is powerful. If all the people around you worship idols, it might be tempting to join them.
- Lots of people worship money or fame or celebrities. These could be kinds of idolatry if taken too far.
- The world is a scary place. Sometimes people look in the wrong places because they want to feel safe and cared for.



Disagree!

- How can anyone worship something made by human beings out of metal or wood or stone? Not tempting in the least.
- Benei Yisrael saw God perform extraordinary miracles in Egypt and at the splitting of the sea, and they saw and heard God give the Torah on Har Sinai! The חֵטְא הָעֵגֶל (heit ha-eigel, sin of the golden calf) makes no sense.
- When you believe in God, it's hard to imagine anything else.

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הַפְטָרָה • Haftarah

King Ahav and Queen Izevel were two of Israel's worst rulers ever. They encouraged people to worship idols, and they treated God's prophets with cruelty.

Their arch-nemesis was אֵלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא (Eliyahu ha-Navi, the prophet Elijah). Our haftarah tells the story of what happened when Eliyahu challenged Ahav and his prophets to a face-off to prove who is the true God.

The opponents: 850 prophets of Ba'al and Asherah (two forms of idolatry) vs. Eliyahu ha-Navi

The location: Har Ha-Carmel

The challenge: Each side sets up an animal as a sacrifice, without lighting a fire on it. When a fire miraculously comes from above and consumes one of these sacrifices, everyone will know which side is the winner.

The prophets of Ba'al go first, crying out, "O Ba'al, answer us!" (Melakhim Alef 18:26). They shout and dance, but there's no answer.

Then it's Eliyahu's turn. To prove how confident he is, he has them pour water all over his sacrifice, and then he calls out to the God of Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov saying, "עֲנֵנִי ה׳ עֲנֵנִי וְיֵדְעוּ הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי אַתָּה ה׳ הָאֱלֹקִים (Answer me, Hashem, answer me, and let this whole nation know that You are the Hashem the God)!"



After that, fire descends from above and consumes Eliyahu's sacrifice, along with the wood, stones, earth, and water around it! Everyone there cries out: ה׳ הוּא הָאֱלֹקִים ה׳ הוּא הָאֱלֹקִים (Hashem is the God, Hashem is the God) (18:39).

What's the connection to Ki Tissa?

The scene at Har Ha-Carmel is similar to the חֵטְא הָעֵגֶל (heit ha-eigel, the sin of the golden calf). In both events, groups of people betray God and then a leader—Eliyahu or Moshe—shows them the right path to God.

By linking our parashah to this haftarah, our Rabbis seem to be warning us that the heit ha-eigel was not a one-time event. People are always tempted by other gods, or other things to worship. It's our responsibility to prevent all forms of idolatry and to be strong in our commitment to God alone.



דִּקְדּוּק • Grammar

Take a close look at the name of our parashah. Which letters have דְּגֵשִׁים (degeishim)—dots—in the middle?

כִּי תִשָּׂא

The first letter, כ (kaf), has a דָּגֵשׁ קַל (dagesh kal). We talked about this kind of dagesh a few weeks back. (Remember BeGeD KeFeT? See Devash for Yitro.)

But what about the dagesh in the שׂ (sin)? Why is it there? Does it change the sound?

This dot is known as a דָּגֵשׁ חָזָק (dagesh hazak), a "strong dagesh," because its job is to make a letter stronger, or doubled, like there are two of that letter. In this case, it's doubled because the root of תִשָּׂא (tissa) is נ.שׂ.א (nasa, to lift up / to count). In תִשָּׂא (tissa), the נ is sort of swallowed by the שׂ (sin), so its sound gets doubled, and it gets a dagesh hazak to tell us that!

The same thing happens in another famous word. Did you ever notice that "Shabbat" is usually spelled with two b's in English? Why not just spell it Shabat? Well, in Hebrew, it is spelled שַׁבָּת, with a dagesh hazak in the ב (bet)! That means the "b" sound should be doubled!

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Here is another example from our parashah where a dagesh hazak changes how you pronounce a word:

Dagesh hazak here! לָמָּה (שמות לב:יב)

לָמָה (שמות לב:יא) No dagesh hazak here

The dagesh hazak in the word on the left means the מ (mem) is meant to be pronounced harder in that word. If you look even closer, you will see that the dagesh also changes the accent. The word on the right is pronounced la-MAH, with the accent on the second syllable. But the word on the left is pronounced LAM-mah, with the accent on the first syllable and extending the m sound a little. That dagesh had a big effect on the word, right?

How would you write the name of our parashah in English?

מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Shemot 32:16

And the luhot (tablets) were God's work,
and the writing was God's writing,
carved on the luhot.

שמות לב:טז

וְהַלֻּחֹת מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹקִים הֵמָּה
וְהַמִּכְתָּב מִכְתַּב אֱלֹקִים הוּא
חָרוּת עַל הַלֻּחֹת:



Why does the pasuk have to tell us that the writing was carved? Isn't that just how you write on tablets?!

Mishnah Avot 6:2

Do not read the word "harut" ("carved"), but rather "heirut" ("free"), because no one is free unless they are occupied with learning Torah.

משנה אבות ו:ב

אַל תִּקְרָא חָרוּת אֶלָּא חֵרוּת,
שֶׁאֵין לְךָ בֶּן חוֹרִין אֶלָּא מִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק
בְּתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה.



- In what ways do learning and education set you free?
- What is particularly freeing about learning Torah more than anything else?
- How can we be free if what we are learning in the Torah is how to be servants of God?

שְׁאֵלוֹת הַשָּׁבוּעַ • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

aliyot:
1) Shemot 30:11 to 31:17
2) 31:18 to 33:11
3) 33:12 to 33:16
4) 33:17 to 33:23
5) 34:1 to 34:9
6) 34:10 to 34:26
7) 34:27 to 35:35

haftarah for Ashkenazim:
Melakhim Alef 18:1-39

haftarah for Sefardim:
18:20-39

The answers to the first seven questions can be found in the matching numbered aliyah in the Torah reading. The answers to questions 8 and 9 are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah. The answer to question 10 is in this week's haftarah.

Good luck!

1. Who was Aholiav's father?
2. What foul-tasting beverage did Benei Yisrael drink?
3. Two two-letter Hebrew words appear twice in the same verse. What are they?
4. What was Moshe not allowed to see?
5. Who did Moshe take with him when he went back up הַר סִינַי (Har Sinai, Mount Sinai)?
6. In what liquid are you not allowed to cook a kid (the animal!)?
7. What did Moshe wear on his face after he came down from the mountain? Why?
8. What two things in our parashah are you not allowed to make for your own use?
9. Which pesukim in our parashah remind you of Elul and the יָמִים נוֹרָאִים (Yamim Noraim, High Holidays)?
10. **From the haftarah:** How many stones did Eliyahu use to build his מִזְבֵּחַ (mizbe'ah, altar)? Why?





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* Look for the answers on page 8!

מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Our parashah gives the recipe for the קְטֹרֶת (ketoret, incense) that was burned in the מִשְׁכָּן (Mishkan, sanctuary for God in the wilderness). What can we learn from the different spices that make up the ketoret?

Here's one lesson, about the ingredient called חֶלְבְּנָה (helbenah).

Talmud Bavli Keritut 6b

Rav Hana bar Bizna says that R. Shimon Hasida says: Any communal fast that does not include sinners from the Jewish people is not actually a fast. We know this because helbenah, which has a bad smell, is listed in the Torah among the ingredients of the ketoret.

תלמוד בבלי כריתות דף ו עמוד ב

אָמַר רַב חָנָא בַּר בִּזְנָא אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן חֲסִידָא: כָּל תַּעֲנִית שֶׁאֵין בָּהּ מִפּוֹשְׁעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵינָהּ תַּעֲנִית, שֶׁהֲרֵי חֶלְבְּנָה רֵיחָהּ רַע וּמְנָאָהּ הַכָּתוּב עִם סַמְמָנֵי קְטֹרֶת.

According to this, when helbenah is burned on its own, it produces a bad smell. But it was included in the ketoret in the Mishkan anyhow!

You might be surprised that the ketoret recipe includes any ingredients that smell bad. But R. Shimon Hasida explains that this is on purpose. Helbenah teaches us that, in our communities, we need to include people who might seem imperfect, even if they sin. If we try to create communities without those people, our prayers and fasts won't work.

- Why would fasts and prayers not be successful without including everyone? What do we gain by including sinners?
- What does this midrash teach us about community?
- When is it sometimes hard to include people, and what can you do to include them?



Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Ahisamakh (31:6)
2. Water mixed with the powder of the ground-up עֵגֶל הַזָּהָב (eigel hazahav, golden calf) (32:20)
3. נָא (na, please) and חֵן (hein, grace) (33:13)
4. God's face (33:20,23)
5. Nobody! (34:3)
6. Its mother's milk (34:26)
7. A מַסְוֶה (masveh, veil), because his face shone and people were afraid of it (34:30, 33)
8. שֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה (shemen ha-mishha, the anointing oil) and the קְטֹרֶת (ketoret, incense) (30:33, 38)
9. 34:6-7, which contain the י"ג מִדּוֹת הָרַחֲמִים (yud gimmel middot ha-rahamim, God's 13 attributes of mercy) that we say in Selihot prayers
10. 12 stones to represent the tribes of Benei Yisrael (Melakhim Alef 18:31)