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March 1 - 7, 2026 ל"ב - י"ח אדר תשפ"ו



קַה 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'ah, anointing oil), and the קֶטֶרֶת 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 לְחוֹת (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.





Shemot 32:1

When the people saw that Moshe was slow in coming down from the mountain, they gathered against Aharon and said to him:

"Come, make us an elohim who will go before us, for that man Moshe, who brought us from Mitzrayim (Egypt)— we don't know what happened to him."

שמות לב:א

וַיֵּרָא הָעָם כִּי בִשְׁשׁ מִשָּׁה לָרַדְתָּ מִן הָהָר
וַיִּקְהַל הָעָם עַל אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו
קוּם עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ לִפְנֵינוּ
כִּי זֶה מֹשֶׁה הָאִישׁ
אֲשֶׁר הֵעֵלָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
לֹא יָדַעְנוּ מָה הָיָה לוֹ:

What exactly were Benei Yisrael asking for? "Make us an elohim" can mean more than one thing, and our פְּרָשְׁנִים (parshanim, commentators) understand it in different ways.

Rashi (France, 1,000 years ago)

"Who will go before us" – they wished to have many gods.

רש"י

"אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ לִפְנֵינוּ" – אֱלֹהוֹת הַרְבֵּה אוֹי לָהֶם.

Ramban (Spain, 800 years ago)

Clearly Benei Yisrael didn't think Moshe was God, or that Moshe could make miracles on his own. So why would they say that, since Moshe was missing, they needed to replace him with a god?

...Really, they were asking for a new (leader like) Moshe.

רמב"ן

בְּיָדוּעַ שֶׁלֹּא הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל סְבוּרִים שְׂמִשָּׁה
הוּא הָאֱלֹקִים, וְשֶׁהוּא בְּכַחוֹ עֹשֶׂה לָהֶם
הָאֲתוֹת וְהַמוֹפְתִים, וּמָה טַעַם שֶׁיֹּאמְרוּ
כִּי יוֹן שֶׁהִלֵּךְ מֹשֶׁה מִמֶּנּוּ נַעֲשֶׂה אֱלֹהִים?
...אָבֵל הָיוּ מִבְּקָשׁוֹן מֹשֶׁה אַחֵר.



Rashi notices that the word יִלְכוּ (yeilkhu, will go) is plural, so he understands that the people were asking for something multiple: many gods.

Rashi believes that, in this moment, Benei Yisrael were drawn to idolatry.

But Ramban thinks that Benei Yisrael were actually asking for a replacement leader. He thinks that makes more sense in our pasuk, which says that Benei Yisrael's complaint was about missing Moshe.

- In Shemot 4:17, Moshe is called an "elohim." Look it up! Could this be evidence for Ramban's interpretation? How so?
- What is similar about the interpretations of Rashi and Ramban, and what is different? What was so bad about what Benei Yisrael did?
- What's the lesson for us to learn from the story of the eigel, according to Rashi, and according to Ramban?





מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

What was the consequence of the sin of the עֵגֶל (eigel, calf)?

This somewhat odd and surprising pasuk might help us understand.

שמות לג:

וַיִּתְּנוּצְלוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת עֲדִימָם
מִהָר חוֹרֵב:

Shemot 33:6

Benei Yisrael removed their jewelry from Har Horev.



Bzzzz
A lot of midrashim are
bugged by something
unusual in the Torah text

Har Horev is another name
for Har Sinai. Was there
jewelry there? Did we hear
about that back in Parashat
Yitro? Not really!

The Talmud tells a story that fills in the missing information.

Talmud Bavli Shabbat 88a

R. Simai taught: When Benei Yisrael said "na'aseh—we will do" before saying "nishma—we will hear" (Shemot 24:7), 600,000 angels came and placed two crowns on the heads of each member of Benei Yisrael. One was for "na'aseh" and one was for "nishma."

תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף פח עמוד א

דַּרְשׁ רַבִּי סִימַאי: בְּשַׁעַר שְׁהַקְדִּימוּ
יִשְׂרָאֵל "נַעֲשֶׂה" לְ"נִשְׁמַע" בָּאוּ
שְׁשִׁים רְבּוּאָה שֶׁל מַלְאָכֵי הַשָּׁרָת,
לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל קָשְׂרוּ לוֹ
שְׁנֵי כְתָרִים, אֶחָד כְּנָגֵד "נַעֲשֶׂה"
וְאֶחָד כְּנָגֵד "נִשְׁמַע".

Then when the people sinned, 1,200,000 angels of destruction came down and removed the crowns, as it says: "And Benei Yisrael removed their jewelry from Har Horev."

...Reish Lakish said: In the future, the Holy Blessed One will return the crowns to us, as it is stated: "And the redeemed ones will return, and come with singing to Tziyon (Yerushalayim), with everlasting joy on their heads" (Yeshayahu 35:10). This means the joy they once had on their heads—their old crowns.

וְכִינּוּן שֶׁחֲטְאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְרַדּוֹ מֵאֵה וְעֲשָׂרִים רְבּוּא מְלָאכֵי חֲבָלָה וּפִיִּרְקוּם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיִּתְּנֻצְלוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת עֲדִים מֵהָר חוֹרֵב."

...אָמַר רִישׁ לָקִישׁ: עֲתִיד הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְהַחְזִירָנוּ לָנוּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וּפְדוּיָי ה' יִשְׁבּוּן וּבָאוּ צִיּוֹן בְּרִנָּה וּשְׂמִחַת עוֹלָם עַל רֵאשִׁים" – שְׂמִיחָה שְׂמֵעוֹלָם עַל רֵאשִׁים.



The crowns in this story symbolize Benei Yisrael's spiritual accomplishment at Har Sinai. R. Simai is saying something sad: What the people gained from מַתַּן תּוֹרָה (matan Torah, the giving of the Torah), they lost with the eigel.

- Why would a crown be a good gift for Benei Yisrael at matan Torah? What about the matan Torah experience would a crown represent?
- What part of the matan Torah experience was lost because of the eigel? What does losing those crowns represent?
- The midrash ends with a hopeful message. What might it be like to get these crowns back in the future? What would we have to do to get them back?





פְּשֵׁט הַפְּסוּקִים • Understanding the Verses

After the sin of the עֵגֶל (eigel, calf), Moshe destroys the eigel, prays to God to save Benei Yisrael, carves a new set of לְחוֹת (luhot, tablets), and spends another 40 days and 40 nights on הַר סִינַי (Har Sinai, Mount Sinai) with God. When he comes down from the mountain, the Torah describes a transformation that happened to him.

Shemot 34:29-30

When Moshe came down from Har Sinai, there were two luhot of testimony in Moshe's hands when he came down from the mountain.

Moshe didn't know that the skin of his face was glowing, since he had spoken with God.

Aharon and all of Benei Yisrael saw that the skin of Moshe's face was glowing; and they were scared to come near him.

שמות לד:כט-ל

וַיְהִי בִּרְדֹת מֹשֶׁה מֵהַר סִינַי
וּשְׁנֵי לְחֹת הָעֵדוּת בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה בִּרְדֹתָו
מִן הָהָר
וּמֹשֶׁה לֹא יָדַע כִּי קָרַן עוֹר פָּנָיו
בְּדַבְּרוֹ אֵתוֹ:

וַיֵּרָא אֶהָרֹן וְכָל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת מֹשֶׁה
וַהֲנִה קָרַן עוֹר פָּנָיו
וַיִּירָאוּ מִגִּשְׁתֹּ אֵלָיו:

- ◆ What sticks out to you? What questions do you have?
- ◆ This wasn't the first time Moshe spoke to God. What might have been different about this time that made his face glow?



- ◆ What does it mean about Moshe that his face shone with light? What does it mean about him that he didn't realize it?
- ◆ Why do you think Benei Yisrael were frightened?





בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

Our midrash (p. 4) described Benei Yisrael getting crowns at הר סיני (Har Sinai, Mount Sinai). What kind of crowns were these?

This mishnah might help us understand.

Mishnah Avot 4:13

R. Shimon said: There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of royalty.

משנה אבות פרק ד משנה יג

רבי שמעון אומר: שלשה כתרין הם, כתר תורה, וכתר כהונה, וכתר מלכות.

Rambam discusses these three kinds of crowns (Hilkhot Talmud Torah 3:1).

- ◆ כתר כהונה (keter kehunah, the crown of priesthood) went to Aharon, the first כהן גדול (kohen gadol, high priest), and his descendents.
- ◆ כתר מלכות (keter malkhut, the crown of royalty) went to King David and his descendents.
- ◆ כתר תורה (keter Torah, the crown of Torah) is standing there ready for us all. Anyone who wants the keter Torah can come and take it!

Rambam emphasizes that, of these three, keter Torah is the most important. Even though it's special to be born into a unique status (like being a kohen or being royalty), Rambam seems to be saying that the best way to be special is through learning Torah and doing mitzvot, and that's something anyone can do.



- ◆ What is a keter Torah in real life? Can you think of someone who has it? How can you get it?
- ◆ Why do you think Rambam says that the best crown of all is the keter Torah?
- ◆ What things are special about you because of how you were born? What are things you have worked for that make you special? What can this teach us about the keter Torah?



שאלות השבוע • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

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.**

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 34:35

haftarah for Parah:

Yehezkel 36:16-36 for Sefaradim and 36:16-38 for Ashkenazim

Good luck!

1 What sins in this aliyah get punished with כְּרִית (karet, being "cut off" from the nation)?



2 What special beverage did Benei Yisrael drink?

3 Can you find three appearances of words connected to the word פָּנִים (panim, face)?

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 What holiday is connected to the wheat harvest?

7 What did Moshe not know?

8 Who describes Benei Yisrael as a stiff-necked people?



9 Which pesukim in our parashah remind you of Elul and the יָמִים נוֹרָאִים (Yamim Nora'im, High Holidays)?

10 **Haftarah for Sefaradim:** How many times did they pour water on Eliyahu's sacrifice?

Haftarah for Ashkenazim: What kind of heart does God promise to give to the people?

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Look for the answers on page 11!



רְגַע שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

Shemot 30:25

שמות ל:כה

Make a holy anointing oil, a **compound** of **ingredients expertly blended**, to serve as holy anointing oil.

וְעָשִׂיתָ אֹתוֹ שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת קֹדֶשׁ רֶקַח מִרְקַחַת
מַעֲשֵׂה רֶקַח שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה:

- לְרַקַּח (שָׂרַשׁ ר.ק.ח.)
1. To prepare a blend of oils, spices, or other compounds
 2. To "cook up" a plan (lirko'ah)



= בַּיִת מִרְקַחַת
Pharmacy
(beit mirkachat)

= מִרְקַחַת
Fruit cooked in sugar; jam
(mirkachat)

= רוֹקֵי'אח/רוֹקַחַת
Pharmacist
(rokei'ah/rokachat)

Find the Word!

This שָׂרַשׁ (shoresh, root) appears when the Torah tells us about the קְטֹרֶת הַסַּמִּימִים (ketoret ha-sammim, incense) that was blended for the mishkan. In Shemot chapter 30, the shoresh comes up **six** times! Can you find them all? How do you think ketoret connects to the work of a pharmacist?



הַלְכָּה • Halakhah

Our parashah begins with the command of the מַחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל (mahatzit ha-shekel), a donation of a half-shekel of silver to help support the building of the mishkan. These gifts provided the silver for the אֲדָנִים (adanim, sockets) that held up the whole mishkan.

Later on, this idea of a half-shekel gift was used to help support the בַּיִת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ (Beit Ha-Mikdash, Holy Temple) in Yerushalayim. And the time to give it each year was in Adar, the month we're in right now!



Did you know that even though there's no mishkan or Beit Ha-Mikdash today, the practice of a half-shekel donation still continues in many communities? Here is one description of how it works:

R. Moshe Isserles, Orah Hayyim 694:1

Some say that, before Purim, you should donate half of the standard currency in your time and place, in memory of the half-shekel that they used to give each Adar. And since the word "terumah" (donation) appears three times in the parashah (of Ki Tissa), you should donate that amount three times. And the time to give it is before praying Minhah right before Purim, and that is the practice in these lands...

רמ"א אורח חיים תרצד:א

יש אומרים שיש לתן קדם פורים
מחצית מן המטבע הקבוע באותו
מקום ובאותו זמן, זכר למחצית
השקל שהיו נוֹתְנִין בְּאֶדְר. ומֵאֲחֵר
שֶׁשְׁלֹשָׁה פְּעָמִים כְּתוּב תְּרוּמָה
בְּפָרָשָׁה, יֵשׁ לְתוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה. וְיֵשׁ לְתַנּוּ
בְּלֵיל פּוּרִים קֹדֶם שְׁמֵת־פְּלִלִים מְנַחֵה
וְכוּ נוֹהֲגִין בְּכָל מְדִינוֹת אֵלוּ...

Until today, many communities make sure to put out three half-dollar coins starting on the afternoon before Purim. You can "buy" these coins by putting at least \$1.50 towards tzedakah. You make your donation, pick up the three half-dollars for a moment to make them yours, and then donate them back so other people can do the same thing.

The donations often go to support the shul or other worthy causes. And by giving mahatzit ha-shekel before Purim to do good things in the world, we get a jump start against Haman, who tried to use his own money to do very bad things.

See if you can find some half-dollars where you live if you haven't already, and Happy Purim!





Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Making שמן המשחה (shemen ha-mish'hah, anointing oil) for personal use (30:33), making קטורת הסמים (ketoret ha-sammim, incense) for personal use (30:38), violating Shabbat (31:14)
2. Water mixed with the powder of the ground-up עגל (eigel, calf) (32:20)
3. פני (panai, My face), פניך (panekha, Your face), פני (peney, the face of) (33:14,15,16)
4. God's face (33:20,23)
5. Nobody! (34:3)
6. Shavuot (34:22)
7. That his face was glowing (34:29)
8. God (32:9, 33:3, 33:5) and Moshe (34:9)
9. י"ג מידות הרחמים (yud gimmel middot ha-rahamim, God's 13 attributes of mercy) that we say in Selihot prayers
10. Haftarah for Sefaradim: Three times (Melakhim Alef 18:34)
Haftarah for Ashkenazim: A new heart and a heart of flesh (Yehezkel 36:26)



דקה של דיון • One-Minute Debate

Debate: It's shocking that Benei Yisrael sinned with the עגל (eigel, calf) so soon after experiencing מתן תורה (Matan Torah, the giving of the Torah).

How to play:

Agree



Agree!

- ◆ At Matan Torah Benei Yisrael heard God speak to them directly. There was thunder, lightning, fire, smoke, clouds, and shofar sounds. You'd think that would make a strong impression!
- ◆ Matan Torah was the climax of many miracles from God, including the 10 plagues and קריעת ים סוף (keriat yam suf, the splitting of the Reed Sea). It's really hard to understand how the people could worship an idol after all that.

Maybe both?



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.

Disagree



Disagree!

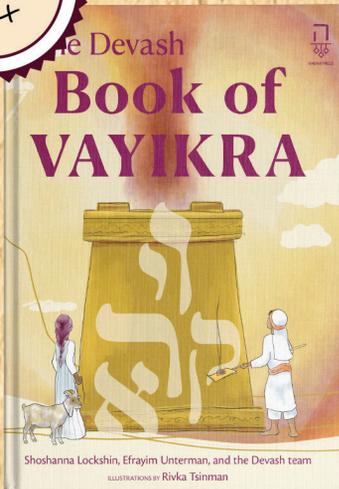
- ◆ Matan Torah might have been really impressive, but even great miracles can't give a person true faith. That comes from inside, and they just didn't have it.
- ◆ Matan Torah was too recent. Benei Yisrael didn't have enough time to get used to observing God's mitzvot as free people.
- ◆ Matan Torah was scary.
- ◆ It's possible Benei Yisrael were trying to get closer to God, and they thought the eigel would help them do that.

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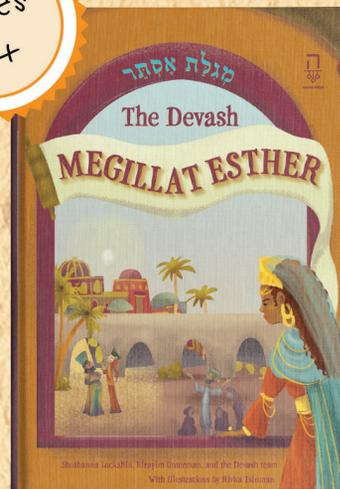
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