

# Parsha Q&A



## Parshas Ki Sisa

For the week ending 18 Adar 5759  
5 & 6 March 1999

*Dedicated by Jerrold Greenberg and Toby F. Block in honor of the  
Rabbonim and students of Torah at Yeshiva Atlanta, Atlanta, Georgia.*

### Parsha Questions

1. How many "geira" are there in a shekel?
2. What was the minimum age of military service in the Jewish army?
3. What were the three different types of *terumah* donated?
4. The Jews were counted after *Yom Kippur* and again after *Pesach*. Both times they numbered the same amount. How can this be? Didn't some 19 year olds turn 20 during that six month period?
5. How many ingredients comprise the incense of the *Mishkan*?
6. According to Rashi, why are sailors called "*malachim*?"
7. What is the difference between *chochma* (wisdom), *bina* (understanding), and *da'as* (knowledge)?
8. Shabbos is a "sign." What does it signify?
9. When did the Jewish People begin to give contributions for the building of the *Mishkan*?
10. How many books are there in Tanach?
11. From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
12. Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
13. Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
14. How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
15. Why did Moshe ask that his name be erased from the Torah?
16. How has the sin of the golden calf affected the Jewish People throughout history?
17. In verse 33:2, Hashem says that the inhabitants of *Eretz Canaan* would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?
18. How did Hashem show that He forgave the Jewish People?
19. How did Moshe become wealthy?
20. How do the light rays shining from Moshe's face show us the powerful effect of sin?

### Sherlox and the Golden Mystery

"Farthington isn't the baron-heir he purports to be," said world famous detective Sherlox Holmes.

"How do you know?" asked Watstein.

"He wears too much gold," said Sherlox. "A true heir to the kind of fortune he brags of doesn't flaunt it so. Too much gold, too much gold..."

"Speaking of gold," said Watstein, "I'm having trouble understanding this text regarding the golden calf. It says that the people gave their gold earrings to Aharon; Aharon then 'formed them with a stylus and made a metal calf.' (*Shemos 32:3:4*)

"It does seem odd," said Sherlox, "that G-d's chosen one, Aharon, should have had any part in this bovine business."

"The commentaries deal with that issue," said Watstein. "My question is on Rashi's comment. Rashi explains that the word 'metal' in the above verse — '*masecha*' — has the numerical value of 125, indicating that this calf weighed 125 *kantar*-units of gold."

"A hefty heifer indeed!" said Sherlox.

"But why this comment? Why can't 'metal' simply mean metal? It's not Rashi's way to chase after numerical explanations. So why does he do so here?"

"Too much gold," said Sherlox. "Too much gold..."

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## Answer:

“What was this *metal* calf made of?” asked Sherlox.

“Gold, of course,” said Watstein. “The verse says ‘they removed their gold earrings’ and gave them to Aharon.”

“And gold is metal, isn’t it?” said Sherlox.

“Are you trying to suggest the verse should have said a ‘gold calf’ and not a ‘metal calf?’” asked Watstein.

“No, I’m suggesting that the verse should have said just ‘calf’ and nothing more,” said Sherlox.

“Ah! You’re right!” said Watstein. “The word ‘metal’ seems superfluous. The people gave gold, so obviously any calf formed from this gold would be *metal*. Therefore, Rashi needs to seek an additional explanation for this word, which he does by introducing its numerical value.

“A precious explanation, dear Watstein.”

(Based on *Levush Orah*, *Sherlox* is by Reuven Subar  
Inspired by “What’s Bothering Rashi” by Rabbi Avigdor  
Bonchek)

## I Did Not Know That!

“Half of the shekel...to atone for your souls.” (Shemos 30:9)

Each man was to give a half-shekel to atone for the sin of the golden calf. Why only a half-shekel? Because the women took no part in the sin of the golden calf. The half shekel was an atonement for the man, and without his wife he’s only half a person.

## Recommended Reading List

### Ramban

|        |                    |
|--------|--------------------|
| 30:13  | Lashon HaKodesh    |
| 30:19  | Washing Hands      |
| 31:2   | Betzalel           |
| 32:1-4 | The Golden Calf    |
| 32:18  | Sounds             |
| 33:11  | Yehoshua’s Age     |
| 34:27  | A Renewed Covenant |
| 34:28  | The Second Tablets |

### Sefer Hachinuch

|       |                        |
|-------|------------------------|
| 105   | Equality in Sacrifices |
| 107-8 | Anointing              |

### Malbim

|       |                                 |
|-------|---------------------------------|
| 28:5  | Trustworthy Treasurers          |
| 28:30 | The <i>Urim V’Tumim</i>         |
| 29:9  | Donning of the Kohen’s Garments |
| 30:1  | The Incense-Altar               |
| 30:12 | The Concept of Counting People  |
| 31:2  | The Name Betzalel               |
| 31:13 | A Taste of the World-to-Come    |

## Answers to this Week’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 30:13 - Twenty.
2. 30:14 - Twenty.
3. 30:15 - For the *Adanim* (sockets), for the purchase of communal sacrifices, and for the building of the *Mishkan*.
4. 30:16 - Their ages were calculated based on Rosh Hashana, not based on their individual birthdays.
5. 30:34 - Eleven.
6. 30:35 - Because they stir (*malach*) the water with their oars.
7. 31:3 - *Chochma* is knowledge acquired from others. *Bina* is the deduction of new knowledge from what one has already learned. *Da’as* is holy inspiration.
8. 31:13 - It is a sign between Hashem and the Jewish People that He has chosen them and a sign to the nations of the world that He has sanctified the Jewish People.
9. 31:18 - The 11th of Tishrei.
10. 31:18 - 24.
11. 32:2,3 - From their ears.
12. 32:5 - He hoped that by building it himself it would take longer and in the interim Moshe would return.
13. 32:19 - Moshe reasoned: If the Torah forbids those who have estranged themselves from the Torah to partake in even a single commandment (*Pesach* sacrifice), surely the *entire* Torah cannot be given to a whole nation who has estranged itself from Hashem!
14. 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.
15. 32:32 - So people shouldn’t say “Moshe was unworthy to plead for mercy on behalf of the Jewish people.”
16. 32:34 - Whenever Hashem punishes the Jewish People, part of that punishment comes as payment for the sin of the golden calf.
17. 33:2 - The seventh nation, the Girgashites, voluntarily emigrated.
18. 33:14 - He agreed to let His *Shechina* dwell among them.
19. 34:1 - Moshe carved the Tablets out of precious stone. Hashem commanded Moshe to keep the leftover fragments.
20. 34:35 - Before the sin of the golden calf, the people would not have been afraid to look at the light rays, but after the sin they were afraid.