

Summary

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men, age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the *Mishkan* — the women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and Hashem instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the *Mishkan*, its vessels, and Aaron and his sons. Hashem selects Betzalel and Oholiav to be the master craftsmen for the *Mishkan* and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that Hashem made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments. The mixed multitude that left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aaron to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aaron stalls and tries to delay them. Hashem tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the orgy of idol-worship he smashes the Tablets, and destroys the golden calf. The Sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and Hashem accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the *Mishkan*, and Hashem's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks Hashem to show him the rules by which He conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. Hashem tells Moshe to hew new Tablets, and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke His mercy. Idol worship, intermarriage, and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of *Pesach*, the First-born, the First-fruits, Shabbos, *Shavuos* and *Succos* are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of Tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

Shabbos is not just pushing the PAUSE button on life

Commentaries

LABOR OF LOVE

“And on the seventh day, a Shabbos of Shabbosos.” (31:15)

There are two kinds of rest. The first kind of rest is a rest from weariness, a chance to recharge your batteries, to enable yourself to continue to work. For no-one can work indefinitely. Everyone needs a break. The second kind of rest comes at the end of a project. The last brushstroke of a painting. The final sentence of a novel. The last brick in a new home. Then you take a step back and look at your work. You feel the satisfaction of completion. It's finished. It's done. A time to rest and enjoy the fruits of your labors.

“You shall labor for six days and do all your work.” How can you do all your work in six days? Can you build an entire house in six days? The Torah teaches us that when Shabbos comes, even though you're only half-way through your project, you should

think of it as though it was completely finished. In other words, on Shabbos, you should picture yourself as experiencing the sense of rest and satisfaction that comes after a good job well done, and not that you're just taking a break. In a sense, this is what Hashem did when the world was six days old. He looked at the Creation and saw that it was finished, the greatest building project ever, the Heavens and the earth were completed. Our rest on Shabbos is a commemoration of that rest.

This is the essential difference between our Shabbos and the secular idea of a 'day of rest'. The secular world understands the day of rest as a break so that you can return to the week revitalized and refreshed. It's only a break. Shabbos, on the other hand, is not just pushing the pause button on life. It's the creation of a feeling that everything in one's life is complete. There's nothing left to do — except sit back and enjoy the fruits of one's labor.

(Based on Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in
L'Torah UL'Moadim)

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Parshas Ki Sisa - Parshas Parah — 18 Adar 5756, 8 & 9 March 1996

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“Hew for yourself two tablets of stone.” (34:1)

Once, there was a traveler who wanted to visit an exotic and remote country on the roof of the world. This country had the reputation of being almost impossible for tourists to enter. So, when our traveler was granted his tourist visa, it came to him as something of a surprise. However, in spite of this, he was convinced that he would be stopped at the border and refused entry to his destination. He had set his heart on the trip, so he enlisted the services of a ‘special agent’, a certain Mr. Shaker, who had contacts in high places in the government of the country. Shaker was able to magically open ‘locked doors’. All of this came at a price. Quite a tidy sum was deposited in a numbered bank account. And then the word came. All clear. He would be met at the airport by an official who would usher him through the customs and immigration formalities. He needed to bring nothing with him. Not even his visa. He would be recognized immediately and whisked through the airport in a flash.

On arrival, our traveler bounded off the plane and presented himself at the immigration desk. “Visa please!” asked a uniformed official. “I’m sorry?” said the traveler. “I said — ‘Visa Please!’” repeated the official, somewhat irritated. “But — don’t you recognize me?” “If you gave me your visa, maybe I’d be able to recognize you, said the official, sarcastically. “But, but, Mr. Shaker said...” “Look” said the official, “I’ve no idea who this Mr. Shaker is, but all you need to enter the country is a valid visa. However, without that, there’s nothing I can do...”

With this story, perhaps we will understand why it was that the first tablets of the covenant were hewn by Hashem, whereas the second tablets were hewn by Moshe. The sin of the golden calf was not real idol worship, but was based on a mistake: that, since Hashem was the maker of the first tablets, it was impossible to fathom their depths without the assistance of lofty spiritual powers. It was for this reason that the people had fashioned the likeness of the ox to worship, for this is one of the mystical creatures that surround the heavenly throne. The people thought that mystical powers of the ox would help them to transcend the boundaries of human reach and be close to Hashem and to understand His Torah. While Moshe was still with them, they relied on Moshe to bring them close to Hashem, and did not seek other means. However, when they thought that Moshe was dead, they turned to other ways of elevating themselves.

The truth is that every Jew has his own passport to spirituality. It’s called the Torah. It contains all the visas we need to reach out of this world. We need no special agents or intermediaries. With our own human abilities we can achieve the sublime.

It was for this reason that Hashem commanded Moshe to hew the second tablets: to demonstrate that human hands were involved in their making; that through our own efforts, we can earn the help of Hashem to understand all of the words of the Holy Torah and to climb to great heights. It is for that reason that the Torah is called *Toras Moshe* — the Torah of Moshe — the Torah belongs to man. It is possible to gain entry to its most esoteric and remote regions via the visa of human effort.

(Based on Rabbi Moshe Feinstein)

**Haftorah:
Ezekiel 36:16-38
Parshas Parah**

One who aspires to purify himself spiritually, is given help from Above. The period before Rosh Chodesh Nissan is especially favorable for purification. This is one of the reasons that we read Parshas Parah at this time of the year. But there is a more basic reason: In the time of the Beis Hamikdash, it was on the 14th of Nissan that the korban Pesach was brought by all the Jewish People. Parshas Parah deals with the laws of purification that were needed to purify the Jewish People from contact with a dead body — a necessary preliminary to entering the Beis Hamikdash and bringing the korban Pesach. The Haftorah describes the time of Mashiach, when Hashem will ‘sprinkle purifying waters on the Bnei Yisrael’ and remove all the impurities that have encrusted their souls.

“I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh instead.” (46:26)

Hashem’s mitzvos are our life blood. When we neglect them, our hearts freeze over, severed from their lifeline. We become spiritually rigid. Our hearts atrophy, coarsen and eventually become as rigid as stone. And because we then have made ourselves a heart of stone, we don’t realize that this is why we have so little faith. How can a heart of stone have faith? We don’t realize that our complaints against the Almighty come from a rock chamber entombed in our chests. Eventually it will be too late for a ‘bypass’. Hashem will come and give us a heart that is soft, that cries — that wants to hear the word of Hashem and beat in time to its Maker.



Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

Yom Shabbason Ain Lishkoach - j ufakilt in ca ouh
“Shabbos is a day of rest...”

The dove found in it a place to rest j ubn uc v t mn vbuh
and there will the weary ones rest j f gh dh uj ubh o au

Three different interpretations have been suggested for the symbolism of the dove in this song.

1. The dove which Noach sent from the Ark to see if the flood waters had subsided found a place to land in Gan Eden on Shabbos. In similar fashion those who are weary from studying Torah with all their might will also find their rest in Gan Eden.
2. The Shechinah—the Divine presence—is, as it were, homeless during the exile of Israel and finds a place to rest only on Shabbos and Yom Tov.
3. The Jewish Nation is compared to the dove. All other birds rest on a tree or a cliff when they tire but the dove merely folds one weary wing to its body and continues flying with the other. It is the restorative quality of the Shabbos which allows the Jewish dove to keep on going despite all of its wearying hardships.