



Parshas Ki Sisa

For the week ending 22 Adar I 5757
28 February & 1 March 1997

This issue is sponsored by Herschel Kulefsky, Attorney at Law, 15 Park Row, New York, NY 10038, 1-212-693-1671

Overview

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.

Insights

HEADLIGHTS ON

(Moshe said to Hashem): “Show me Your Glory”... (Hashem said to him): “You will see My back, but My face cannot be seen.” (33:18,23)

Have you ever driven down a country road on a moon-less night and turned your headlights off?

Don't do it for more than a second because it's like driving into nothingness!

It's amazing how those two small pencil-beams of light allow you to navigate a tortuous country road, even on the darkest night.

Mind you, you sometimes wonder why the road is making such switch-backs. “Why can't they just make this road straight?” you think to yourself.

This world is like night. The World-to-Come is like day.

It's possible to see at night if you turn on your headlights, but there your vision is restricted to what's illuminated in the beams. It's local.

By day, however, you can see the whole picture.

In daylight it becomes clear why the road twists and turns so much, why sometimes you go up, and sometimes down: Over here there's a hill; there, a river; over there is a chasm.

In this world, a person sees but through a glass, darkly. He catches a few brief excerpts of reality, mere flashes of the way the Creator runs His creation.

The rest is night.

With only the few chapters of world history at our disposal we can't visualize the whole of existence — from where it comes and to where it's going.

That's why this world is like night.

In the World-to-Come everything becomes as clear as day. Distance lends perspective and comprehension.

We are able to understand the reasons Hashem does what He does: Why the road had to have this bend, why we had to go down there so far...

That's what Hashem was telling Moshe when he said “*My face cannot be seen.*”

In this world we cannot see Hashem's ‘face’ — Hashem's direct control of the world; but His ‘back’ — the tell-tale foot-prints in the snow of History — that's clear for all to see, if we keep our ‘head-lamps’ turned on.

HEART AND STONE

“And the tablets are the work of G-d, and the writing, the writing of G-d.” (32:16)

Next time you're in *shul*, take a look at the Ten Commandments above the Ark. The tops of the two Tablets are curved. Why are the Ten Commandments in this shape? The Talmud describes the Tablets as being cubes. There is not a single classical Jewish source which describes the Tablets in the form with which we are familiar today.

Where did this shape come from?

Another question. If the Children of Israel had already *heard* the Ten Commandments, why was it necessary for these Commandments to be engraved on Tablets? Wasn't the overwhelming experience of hearing Hashem speaking sufficient?

When the Ten Commandments were engraved on the Tablets, they were also being engraved on the hearts of the Jewish People for all time. Engraved on the ‘tablet’ of the heart. The writing was the writing of G-d, who indelibly engraved them on the heart of the Jewish People for all time.

Take another look at those Ten Commandments above the Ark. Their rounded tops symbolize the shape of the heart, the heart of the Jewish People, where they have been engraved for some three thousand years.

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SPIRITUAL RAYBANS®

“When the Children of Israel saw Moshe’s face, that Moshe’s face had become radiant, Moshe put the mask back on his face, until he came to speak with Him.” (34:33)

Moshe wore a mask to spare the Jewish People the embarrassment of not being able to look at him.

Before the sin of the golden calf, the Torah says that ‘the appearance of the glory of Hashem was like a consuming fire before the eyes of the Children of Israel.’ After the sin of the golden calf they couldn’t even look at Hashem’s prophet, Moshe.

Such is the power of evil.

When we violate Hashem’s will, we muddy up the windows of our soul so that the light cannot come in. We have to put on spiritual dark glasses because our souls can no longer bear the light.

THE REST IS EASY

“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 our batteries, to enable us 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 arrives, even though we’re only half-way through a project, we should think of it as though it was completely finished.

In other words, on Shabbos we should picture ourselves experiencing the rest and satisfaction that comes after a good job well done — not 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 concept of a day of rest is 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 to sit back and enjoy the fruits of one’s labor.

Haftorah: Melachim I 18:1-39

Just before the *Shofar* sounds on Yom Kippur, bringing to a close 25 hours of prayer and fasting, we repeat the closing words from this week’s Haftorah seven times. “Hashem; He is the G-d.”

Eliyahu HaNavi had challenged the idolatrous prophets of *ba’al* to a public demonstration of Who was really G-d, and who was a fraud. When a miracle happened and Israel saw the truth, they shouted in unison “Hashem; He is the G-d”.

In the same way as the week’s *Parsha* describes Israel wavering on the brink of idol worship, so too the Haftorah tells of one of the worst kings to rule Israel — *Achav*. His queen *Izavel* was a non-Jew who worshipped idols, murdered righteous prophets and filled the palace with idols.

In spite of the danger to his life, *Eliyahu* successfully challenged *Ahav* and *Izavel*. The culmination of his victory was on Mount Carmel, where it became clear to all Yisrael who was G-d.

THE VOICE OF APPEASEMENT

“How long will you dance between two opinions? If Hashem is the G-d, follow Him! And if the ba’al, follow it.” (18:21)

When Moshe *Rabbeinu* was descending from Mount Sinai with the Tablets, and the Children of Israel were busy making the golden calf, *Yehoshua* tried

to comfort him by saying “The sound of battle is in the camp.” This meant that not all of Israel has been infected by idol worship; there is still a battle between the worshippers of the golden calf and those faithful to Hashem.

Moshe replied to him that it was “Not a sound shouting strength nor a sound shouting weakness.” I don’t hear an ounce of resolve in either the worshippers of the calf or in those loyal to Hashem.

The way you see a real struggle is that one side beats the other!

It seems that even those who were not worshipping the calf were taking the stance of tolerance, of neutrality. They were “open to both opinions.” That was “the sound shouting weakness.” Just a voice, nothing more; the voice of appeasement, devoid of action and expectation of improving the situation.

In the fight against idol-worship, whatever that idol may be, only the “sound shouting strength” must be heard, because then it is impossible to dance between two opinions.

Sources:

‘Headlights On’ - Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, ‘Moser Derech’ - Rabbi Simcha Wasserman, Rabbi Yaakov Niman, Rabbi Meir Chadash; ‘Heart And Stone’ - Sfias Emes in *Mayana shel Torah*, Rabbi Moshe Shapiro; ‘RayBans’ - Rashi, Be’er Moshe, Artscroll Chumash; ‘The Rest is Easy’ - Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in *L’Torah Ul’Moadim*; ‘The Voice of Appeasement’ - D’var Hamelacha



INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIROS
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.

ASKINU SEUDASA (Melave Malka)
אתקינו סעודתא (מלוה מלכה)
I SHALL PREPARE THE FEAST (ESCORTING THE QUEEN)...

This is the meal of the holy King David דא היא סעודתא דוד מלכא קדישא da hi seudasa david malca kadisha
King David asked Hashem to reveal to him how long he would live. When informed that there is a Divine decree to withhold such knowledge from any man he asked to at least know on which day of the week he would perish.
Hashem disclosed to David that he would die on Shabbos. When every Shabbos came to an end and David realized that he had at least another week to live he celebrated with a great feast. The meal which we eat after Shabbos in order to accompany the “Shabbos Queen” on her way out is therefore particularly identified with King David for whom it had a special significance.

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