



## GENESIS

Bereishit  
Noach  
Lech Lecha  
Vayeira  
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Vayeitzei  
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Vayechi

## EXODUS

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Vaeira  
Bo  
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Yitro  
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# Tisa 21 תשא

Vayakheil  
Pekudei

## LEVITICUS

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Tzav  
Shemini  
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## NUMBERS

Bemidbar  
Naso  
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## DEUTERONOMY

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# 21 תִּשָּׁא Tisa

## Overview

The subject matter of *parashat Tisa* is problematic from several perspectives. The *parashah* begins with a miscellany of details regarding the priestly service in the Tabernacle:

1. the half-shekel tax used to finance the communal sacrifices,
2. the laver, last of the Tabernacle's vessels,
3. the special oil used to anoint the vessels and the priests,
4. the ingredients of the incense,
5. the appointment of the chief artisans who would fashion the Tabernacle and its accoutrements, and
6. the commandment not to violate the Sabbath in the course of constructing the Tabernacle.

After this, the Torah leaves the subject of the Tabernacle and resumes the narrative of the Giving of the Torah it left off at the end of *parashat Mishpatim*. There is a brief description of the first Tablets, and then we are abruptly plunged into the horrifying, grotesque episode of the Golden Calf and its tragic aftermath. This is followed by the reconciliation between God and the people negotiated by Moses, which includes some of the most mystical moments in the Torah and culminates in the revelation of God's thirteen attributes of mercy, the renewal of the covenant, and Moses' final descent from Mount Sinai with the second Tablets.

In addition to these sudden, jolting switches between extreme depravity and sublime transcendence, the whole *parashah* seems out of place. The first part—the final details of the Tabernacle—would seem to be better placed in *Terumah* and/or *Tetzaveh*. The second part—the Golden Calf and its aftermath—seemingly belongs after *Yitro* and *Mishpatim*. Moreover, a look ahead reveals that the next two *parashiot* (*Vayakheil* and *Pekudei*), which conclude the Book of Exodus, return once again to the subject of the Tabernacle, describing how it was actually constructed. The story of the Golden Calf is thus plucked out of its rightful place as the segue to the giving of the Torah and instead sandwiched in between the instructions for constructing the Tabernacle and their implementation. Why is this?

## OVERVIEW OF TISA

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A clue to all this may be found in the name of this *parashah*, *Tisa*. Literally, this word means “you raise up”; the entire phrase is: “when you raise up the heads of the Israelites.” Although the idiomatic meaning of these words is “when you take the census of the Israelites,” the literal meaning implies that the entire contents of the *parashah* are a process through which the Jewish people become elevated to heights they would not have achieved otherwise. To put it in more relief: even after the purpose of creation was seemingly consummated by the giving of the Torah (*Yitro* and *Mishpatim*) and the institution of the Tabernacle (*Terumah* and *Tetzaveh*), there are still higher levels of this goal that remain to be reached.

Perhaps the most difficult question in this *parashah* is: how could the Jewish people, after having witnessed the power of God demonstrated in the ten plagues and the splitting of the sea and after having received the Torah at Mount Sinai a mere forty days before, commit the sin of the Golden Calf? Although there were many mitigating factors that make their apparent sin much less heinous than a cursory reading of the text of the Torah would imply, the fact still remains that, in the Talmud’s words: “Israel was not capable of committing such an act!” The Talmud’s answer is that “the whole affair was God’s decree, in order to set a precedent for the penitent.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, God maneuvered the Jewish people into this sin in order that they repent for it and come to know the sweetness of reconciliation.

The paradox of sin is that repentance makes it possible to forge a greater connection with God than was possible prior to the sin. Before sinning, an individual’s relationship with God need only be strong enough to keep him on track; as long as he reminds himself that there is a God in the world who requires him to do *x*, *y*, and *z*, he will have no problem doing what is required of him. He is happy, stimulated, and inspired and is growing and developing spiritually in his relationship with God. Once he sins, however, he is confronted with the stark realization that, as perfect as this relationship may have seemed, it was neither strong enough nor deep enough to keep him from sinning (the proof being, of course, that he just sinned). By his choice, he demonstrated—at least on the level of consciousness on which he was functioning—that the enticement of this sin meant more to him than his commitment to God.

He must therefore delve into himself in order to find a place in his soul where God means more to him than the pleasure or fulfillment that this indulgence seemed to offer him. This exercise in deepening his consciousness and awareness of God and re-establishing his relationship with Him at this new, deeper level is called *teshuvah* (“returning” to God) and is the essence of repentance. If the *teshuvah* is real, the individual will have reached a place within himself where his relationship and commitment to God are now so strong that he will no longer be able to commit the sin he is repenting for. Obviously, the more serious the sin, the greater the *teshuvah* required, and the deeper the resulting bond between the individual and God.

Also obviously, this process works only if the individual sins “accidentally,” as though in a state of “temporary insanity.” One cannot intentionally set out to sin in order to achieve a deeper and higher relationship to God, for doing this would prove nothing about the inadequacy of his present connection to God and the necessity to deepen it. It only works if Divine providence, so to speak, propels him into the situation.

By way of example, we may take the analogy of a loving married couple (an apt

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1. *Avodah Zarah* 4b.

## OVERVIEW OF TISA

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analogy, since God and the Jewish people are allegorically considered husband and wife). When one partner betrays or disappoints the other in some way, in order for them to become reconciled they must see if they can reach a place within themselves where their relationship means more to them than any infringement of it. “We are so much a part of each other that you mean more to me than whatever it was you did.” If they truly reach this point, further violation of their relationship is unthinkable.

This is why God had to orchestrate the incident of the Golden Calf, in which the Jewish people fell into the three cardinal sins of idolatry, adultery, and murder. By descending to the lowest depths possible, the people could then be raised to the highest levels of reconciliation with God, and reach a deeper connection to him than would have otherwise been possible. This is evidenced by the revelation of God’s thirteen attributes of mercy, in which God articulates the fact that His covenant with the Jewish people transcends the contractual relationship based on their obedient fulfillment of the commandments, and thus paves the way for *teshuvah*.

The pathos of *teshuvah* is thus the elevation of the Jewish people that needs to occur even after they have received the Torah and the Tabernacle.

Seen in this light, *parashat Tisa* encapsulates the entire overview of creation: it begins with the original perfection (the Tabernacle and the first Tablets), continues on to the drama of history (the incident of the Golden Calf, which in a sense is a replay of the primordial sin of the Tree of Knowledge), and ends with the foretaste of the Messianic resolution (the renewal of the covenant and the second Tablets) which will elevate the world to a higher level of perfection than it knew in the beginning. In the Messianic future, we will be able to achieve the ultimate depths of relationship with God without having to make recourse to the dichotomous dynamic of sin and *teshuvah*, fall and ascent, estrangement and reconciliation.

This explains why this *parashah* begins with the half-shekel tax. The half-shekel tax was a process of *teshuvah*: the money was collected to finance the communal sacrifices, which atone for the sins of the people—“each man shall give God a ransom for his soul when they are counted.” The other details of the Tabernacle described at the beginning of the *parashah* are there to indicate that the purpose of the Tabernacle—the indwelling of God’s presence in the world at large and in man in particular—is most fully accomplished in the context of *teshuvah*, the theme of *Tisa*. This is also why the entire *parashah* is sandwiched between the instructions of the Tabernacle (*Terumah* and *Tetzaveh*) and their implementation, its actual construction (*Vayakheil* and *Pekudei*): its content is, in effect, *part* of the instructions to build the Tabernacle—in fact, the inner dimension of these instructions. It is therefore only fitting that it follow the externalities of the instructions and precede the actual construction.

This dynamic of pristine perfection, fall, and reconciliation is reflected in many ways in the Torah and throughout life, including in the daily life of every Jew as prescribed by the Torah:

Our day begins with our complete surrender to God’s will, beginning with the *Modeh Ani* prayer we recite immediately upon awakening: “I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have mercifully restored my soul to me [after sleeping]; your faith [in me] is great.” We remain absorbed within Divinity throughout our morning prayers and Torah study. After this, we go about our daily affairs, in which we experience tests

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and fluctuations in our Divine consciousness. At the end of the day, we evaluate the strength of our connection with God (as tested by the day's events) in order to see where it needs to be reinforced. This done, we can submit ourselves to God on a higher level than before, as in the close of the bedtime prayer: "Into Your hand I place my spirit; redeem me, O God of truth."

The lesson of *parashat Tisa*, then, is lived out every day of our lives, focusing us constantly on our ultimate goal, the final, Messianic redemption.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Based on *Sefer HaSichot 5752*, vol. 2, pp. 423 ff; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 16, pp. 408 ff; *Torat Shmuel 5630*

ONKELOS

11 ומליל יי עם משה למימר: 12 ארי תקבל ית חשבון בני ישראל למניניהון ויתנון גבר פרקן נפשה קדם יי בד תמני יתהון ולא יהא בהון מותא בד תמני יתהון: 13 דין יתנון כל דעבר על מניניא פלגות סלעא בסלעי קדשא עשרין מעין סלעא פלגות סלעא אפרשותא קדם יי:

30:11 וידבר יהוה אל־משה לאמר: 12 כי תשא את־ראש בני־ישראל לפקדיהם ונתנו איש כפר נפשו ליהוה בפקד אתם ולא־יהיה בהם נגף בפקד אתם: 13 זה יתנו כל־העבר על־הפקדים מחצית השקל בשקל הקדש עשרים גרה השקל מחצית השקל תרומה ליהוה:

RASHI

מונה: "מחצית השקל בשקל הקדש. במשקל השקל שקצבתי לך לשקל בו שקלי הקדש, כגון: שקלים האמורין בפרשת ערכין, ושדה אחוזה: עשרים גרה השקל. עכשו פרש לך כמה הוא: גרה. לשון מעה, וכן בשמואל: "יבוא להשתחות לו לאגרת כסף וככר לחם": עשרים גרה השקל. השקל השלם, שהשקל ארבעה זווים, והוון מתחלתו חמש מעות, אלא באו והוסיפו עליו שתות והעלוהו לשש מעה כסף. ומחצית השקל הנה שאמרתי לך, יתנו תרומה לה:

12 כי תשא. לשון קבלה, בתרגומו. בשתתפץ לקבל סכום מנינם לדעת כמה הם, אל תמנם לגלגלת, אלא יתנו כל־אחד מחצית השקל, ותמנה את השקלים ותדע מנינם: ולא־יהיה בהם נגף. שהמנין שולט בו עין הרע, והדבר בא עליהם, כמו שמצינו בימי דוד: 13 זה יתנו. הראה לו כמין מטבע של אש, ומשקלה מחצית השקל, ואמר לו: כזה יתנו: העבר על־הפקדים. דרך המונין מעבירין את הנמנין זה אחר זה, וכן: "כל אשר־יעבר תחת השקט", וכן "תעברנה הצאן על־ידי

1. ויקרא כו, לב. 2. ירמיה לג, יג. 3. שמואל ב, לו.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

the brain, its emotions are "clothed" within the heart, its senses are "clothed" within the sensory organs, and its powers of action are "clothed" within the various limbs of action.

There is also a part of the soul that is not "clothed" within any part of the body, since there is no body part designed to express it. This is actually the main part of the soul, which throughout our lives normally remains outside our bodies, and of which we are conscious only in exceptional cases (for example, if we would be forced to choose between death and renouncing our faith). This part of the soul is referred to as its "head," while the part of the soul "clothed" in the body is referred to as its "foot."

As a rule, then, our emotional ties to God—our love for Him, our fear of Him, etc.—are an expression of the part of the soul vested in our bodies. We love God to the extent that we understand Him and His goodness with our intellect; we feel the emotional response to this rational awareness in our hearts.

The penitent's love for God, however, extends beyond the limits of rationality. His unquenchable thirst for God inspires him to levels of love that are ordinarily too intense to be manifest in the limited capacities of the mind and heart. Repentance thus lifts us to the level of our soul's "head."<sup>9</sup>

**13 God showed Moses a fiery coin:** As was seen previously,<sup>10</sup> God instructed the people to donate materials to the Tabernacle to atone for their involvement in the incident of the Golden Calf. It is in this context that the half-shekel poll-tax is described in this verse as "the atonement money...to atone for your souls."<sup>11</sup>

Moses was perplexed by the notion that the soul can be redeemed from such a severe sin by a mere piece of silver. Silver and soul are polar opposites: the soul epitomizes the spiritual and silver epitomizes earthliness. Not only is silver taken from the earth, the lowest of the four fundamental "elements"—fire, water, air, and earth<sup>12</sup>—it is usually found deep within the earth; it is the lowest of the low. Since the whole reason the soul needs to be redeemed is because it has succumbed to earthliness, how can too much earthliness be cured by more earthliness?

So Moses was shown a coin of fire—not by an angel, but by God Himself, for God is not bound by the rules of any order, natural or otherwise. God demonstrated that, in the case of the half-shekel, opposites can become one: silver, the lowest element (earth), becomes fire, the highest element. God's point was not that the source of the half-shekel is spirituality, for that is true of every physical object, nor was His point that the half-shekel becomes a vehicle for spirituality, for that

9. *Torah Or* 86b. 10. 25:1-2. 11. v. 16, below. 12. See on Genesis 1:2.

## The Half-Shekel Tax

30:11 Continuing the instructions for the Tabernacle, **GOD spoke to Moses saying:**

12 “In addition to the silver you will collect as part of the donations the people will give voluntarily towards the construction of the Tabernacle, its furnishings, and the priestly vestments, you will collect an additional sum from them when you count them. You will count them when you descend Mt. Sinai after Yom Kippur,<sup>1</sup> in order to know how many remain after the plague they suffered for making the Golden Calf,<sup>2</sup> and again a month after the Tabernacle is erected.<sup>3</sup> In both censuses, you shall count the people indirectly, by collecting a poll tax, because counting them directly may make My attribute of justice reconsider whether they deserve to be so numerous.” (Arousing God’s attribute of justice by deliberately drawing attention to someone’s prosperity is called “casting the evil eye” on him.) “You will use the silver collected at the first of these censuses to make the bases for the Tabernacle’s planks and the hooks for its pillars.<sup>4</sup> You will use the silver collected at the second of these censuses to purchase all the offerings brought that year on the community’s behalf. Therefore, **when you take a census of the Israelites by number, each man shall give GOD a monetary ransom for his soul when they are counted.** This way, **there will not be a plague among them** caused by the ‘evil eye’ **when they are counted.**”

13 God showed Moses a fiery coin weighing half a shekel, and said, **“This is what everyone who passes through the line of those counted shall give: a half-shekel.** This half-shekel is to be half **of the sacred shekel**, i.e., the shekel I have designated for use in all holy purposes—**at twenty gerah to the shekel—a half-shekel as a contribution to GOD.**

### ✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

12 **When you take a census:** The Jewish people are counted four times in the Torah:

1. when they left Egypt (Nisan 15, 2448),<sup>5</sup>
2. when Moses descended Mount Sinai (Tishrei 11, 2449),<sup>6</sup>
3. a month after the Tabernacle was erected (Iyar 1, 2449),<sup>7</sup> and
4. in the last year of their journey in the desert (early 2488).<sup>8</sup>

The common denominator of the last three is that they were all part of repentance processes:

- ♦ The purpose of the second census was to ascertain how many Jews remained after the plague they suffered for having made the Golden Calf. The money collected in this census was used in the

construction of the Tabernacle, which itself was an atonement for the incident of the Golden Calf.

- ♦ The poll-tax of the third census was used for the communal offerings, which included sin-offerings.
- ♦ The purpose of the fourth census was to ascertain how many Jews remained after the plague they suffered in consequence of the incident at Shitim.

Significantly, the idiom for “taking a census” in all three cases literally means “uplifting the head.” This implies that, in some way, repentance elevates the head of the penitent.

To explain: Our souls animate our bodies and act through them; when part of our soul is manifest in a particular part of our body, it is said to be “clothed” within it. Thus, the soul’s intellect is “clothed” within

1. I.e., after Tishrei 10, 2449. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 8, p. 2, note 9. 2. Below, 32:35. 3. I.e., beginning Iyar 1, 2449, as described in the opening of the Book of Numbers. 4. Above, 26:19; below, 38:25-28; Rashi on 30:15. 5. Above, 12:37. 6. Below, 35:1. 7. Numbers 1:1-46. 8. Numbers 26:1-51.



— ONKELOS —  
 14 כל-דעבר על מנניא  
 מבר עשרין שנין ולעלא יתן  
 אפרשותא קדם יי: 15 דעתיר לא  
 יסגי ודמסכן לא יזעיר מפלגות  
 סלעא למתן ית אפרשותא קדם יי  
 לכפרא על נפשותיכון: 16 ותסב  
 ית כסף כפוריא מן בני ישראל  
 ותמן יתה על פלחן משכן זמנא  
 ויהי לבני ישראל לדכרנא קדם יי  
 לכפרא על נפשותיכון:

14 כל העבר על-הפקדים מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה  
 יִתֵּן תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה: 15 הַעֲשִׂיר לְאִירֹבָה וְהִדֵּל לֹא  
 יִמְעִיט מִמַּחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל לְתַת אֶת-תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה  
 לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם: 16 וּלְקַחְתָּ אֶת-כֶּסֶף הַכַּפָּרִים  
 מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנָתַתָּ אֹתוֹ עַל-עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד  
 וְהָיָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְזִכְרוֹן לְפָנַי יְהוָה לְכַפֵּר עַל-  
 נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם: פ

## — RASHI —

שהמנין הזה הוא האמור בחמש הפקודים, שהרי נאמר  
 בו: "בְּאֶחָד לַחֲדָשׁ הַשְּׁנַיִם", והמשכן הוקם בְּאֶחָד לַחֲדָשׁ  
 הָרִאשׁוֹן, שְׁנָאֲמַר: "בְּיוֹם-הַחֲדָשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּאֶחָד לַחֲדָשׁ  
 תִּקֵּים וְגו'"<sup>10</sup>, ומהמנין הזה נעשו האדנים משקלים שלו,  
 שְׁנָאֲמַר: "וְהָיָה מֵאֵת כֶּכֶר הַכֶּסֶף לְצִקְתָּ וְגו'"<sup>11</sup>. הא למדת,  
 ששתיים היו — אחת בתחלת נדבתו אחר יום הכפורים  
 בשנה ראשונה, ואחת בכר הכסף לצקת וְגו'"<sup>11</sup>. הא למדת,  
 המשכן. ואם תאמר: וכי אפשר שבשניהם היו ישראל  
 שנים שש מאות אֶלֶף ושלשת אלפים וחמש מאות  
 וחמשים, שהרי בכסף פקודי העדה נאמר כן, ובחמש  
 הפקודים אף בו נאמר כן: "וְהָיוּ כָל-הַפְּקוּדִים שֵׁשׁ-  
 מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף ושלשת אלפים וחמש מאות וחמשים"<sup>12</sup>,  
 והלא בשתי שנים היו, ואי אפשר שלא היו בשעת  
 מנין הראשון בני תשע-עשרה שנה שלא נמנו, ובשניה  
 נעשו בני עשרים. תשובה לדבר: אצל שנות האנשים  
 — בשנה אחת נמנו, אֶבֶל למנין יציאת מצרים — היו  
 שתי שנים, לפי שליציאת מצרים מונין מניסן, כמו  
 ששינו במסכת ראש השנה<sup>14</sup>, ונבנה המשכן בראשונה  
 והוקם בשניה, שנתחדשה שנה בְּאֶחָד בְּנִיסָן, אֶבֶל שנות  
 האנשים מנויין למנין שנות עולם המתחילין מתשרי.  
 נמצאו שני המנינים בשנה אחת — המנין הראשון היה  
 בתשרי לאחר יום הכפורים שנתרצה המקום לישראל  
 לטלח להם ונצטוו על המשכן, והשני בְּאֶחָד בְּאִירֹבָה עַל-  
 עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד. הן האדנים שנעשו בו:

14 מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמַעְלָה. למדך כאן שאין פחות  
 מִבְּנֵי עֲשָׂרִים יוצא לצבא ונמנה בכלל אנשים: 15 לְכַפֵּר  
 עַל-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם. שלא תנגפו על ידי המנין. דבר אחר:  
 "לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם" — לפי שרמזו להם כאן שלש  
 תרומות, שנקבת כאן "תְּרוּמַת ה'" שלש פעמים: אחת  
 — תְּרוּמַת אֲדָנִים, שְׁמִנְאָן כְּשֶׁהִתְחִילוּ בְּנִדְבַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן,  
 וְנָתְנוּ כָל-אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מַחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל, וְעַלָּה לְמֵאֵת כֶּכֶר,  
 שְׁנָאֲמַר: "וְכֶסֶף פְּקוּדֵי הָעֵדָה מֵאֵת כֶּכֶר"<sup>13</sup>, ומהם נעשו  
 האדנים, שְׁנָאֲמַר: "וְהָיָה מֵאֵת כֶּכֶר הַכֶּסֶף וְגו'"<sup>15</sup>. והשנית  
 — אף היא על ידי מנין, שְׁמִנְאָן מִשְׁהוּקֵם הַמִּשְׁכָּן, הוּא  
 הַמִּנְיָן הָאֲמוּר בְּתַחֲלַת חֲמֵשׁ הַפְּקוּדִים: "בְּאֶחָד לַחֲדָשׁ  
 הַשְּׁנַיִם בְּשֶׁנָּה הַשְּׁנִית"<sup>16</sup>, וְנָתְנוּ כָל-אֶחָד מַחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל,  
 וְהָיוּ בָהֶם עֲנִיִּים וְעֹשִׁירִים, וְעַל אוֹתָהּ תְּרוּמָה נֶאֱמַר:  
 "לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם", שְׁהִקְרַבְנוּ לְכַפֵּרָה הֵם בְּאִים.  
 והשלישית — היא תְּרוּמַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן, כְּמוֹ שְׁנָאֲמַר: "כָּל-  
 מְרִים תְּרוּמַת כֶּסֶף וְנִחֲשֹׁתִי"<sup>17</sup>, וְלֹא הָיְתָה יָד בְּלֵם שְׁוֹה  
 בָּהּ, אֶלֶּא אִישׁ אִישׁ מֵה-שְׁנִדְבּוּ לָבוֹ: 16 וְנָתַתָּ אֹתוֹ עַל-  
 עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד. למדת, שְׁנִצְטוּהוּ לְמִנוּחָם בְּתַחֲלַת  
 נְדַבַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן אַחֵר מַעֲשֵׂה הָעֶגְלָה, מִפְּנֵי שְׁנִכְנַס בָּהֶם  
 מִגְּפָה, כְּמוֹ שְׁנָאֲמַר: "וַיִּגַּף ה' אֶת-הָעָם"<sup>18</sup>. מִשָּׁל לְצִאֵן  
 הַחִבִּיבָה עַל בְּעֻלְיָה שְׁנִפֵּל בָּהּ דָּבָר, וּמִשְׁפָּסֵק אָמַר לוֹ  
 לְרוּעָה: בְּבִקְשָׁה מִמֶּךָ, מִנָּה אֵת צֹאנֵי יָדְעָה כְּמֵה נֹתְרוּ  
 בָּהֶם. לְהוֹדִיעַ שְׁהָיָה חִבִּיבָה עֲלָיו. וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר לוֹמַר

4. שמות לח, כה. 5. שם, כז. 6. במדבר א, א. 7. שמות לה, כד. 8. שמות לב, לה. 9. במדבר א, א. 10. שמות מ, ב. 11. שמות לח, כז. 12. שמות לח, כז.  
 13. במדבר א, מו. 14. ב, ב.

## — CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

allel and reflect the ten attributes (the *sefirot*) God assumes in creating and constantly re-creating the world. When we channel all ten powers of our soul, every nuance of our being, toward uniting with God

and fulfilling our Divine mission, we align our soul-powers with God's attributes. Our ten becomes twenty—a holy shekel.<sup>19</sup>

19. *Sefer HaSichot* 5752, vol. 2, pp. 440-441.



**14 Whoever passes through the line of those counted for the purpose of conscription into the army—i.e., every male twenty years old and over up to age sixty<sup>13</sup>—shall give the contribution for God.**

**15 The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when giving the contribution for God to atone for your souls through the communal offerings.** There are no poor among you now, but there are still differences in everyone's wealth. Furthermore, this contribution must be given every year, and in the future some of the people may well be poor.<sup>14</sup>

**16 You shall take the atonement money you collect from the Israelites at the first of these censuses and allocate it to the service of the Tent of Meeting, using it to make the bases for the Tabernacle's planks and hooks for its pillars.<sup>15</sup> It will thus serve the Israelites as a remembrance before God, to atone for your souls."**

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✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

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is true of any object used to fulfill a commandment. Rather, God's point was that even the physical half-shekel can be transformed into "fire" and thereby have the power to redeem a soul.

This transformation occurs by virtue of the essence of our souls, which are a part of God. The soul's essence never sins; only the superficial aspect of the soul manifest in the body is susceptible to the ploys of the evil inclination. If we involve the essence of our souls and our entire being in what we do, we can harmoniously blend fire and silver.

A coin given without feeling is indeed cold and unremarkable. But a coin given with the warmth and enthusiasm of the soul's essence is fire—live spirituality—and can atone for the gravest sin. This was the coin of fire shown to Moses.

*A parable (some say from the Baal Shem Tov): A person studied to be a goldsmith and silversmith. His teacher taught him all the details necessary to become an expert. But assuming it obvious, he left out one detail: to light the fire.*

The lesson embodied in the half-shekel applies to all the commandments we perform. If we perform them with spiritual vitality and enthusiasm, they become coins of fire.<sup>16</sup>

**T**his does not imply, however, that commandments performed without any apparent enthusiasm are worthless. The essence of every Jew's soul burns with the desire to do God's will; this desire can be temporarily concealed, but it is never absent. Even if we must force ourselves to do God's bidding, our act is still a "coin of fire" by virtue of the inner essence of our soul. Even when we approach another Jew on the

street and ask him to put on *tefilin* or fulfill some other commandment, and he does so just to do us a favor or so we'll leave him alone, his act is still a "coin of fire" by virtue of the inner essence of his soul.<sup>17</sup>

**A**llegorically, silver coins and fire are opposites. Fire, which constantly soars upward, is a metaphor for our ardent yearning to transcend our limits and become one with God. The silver coin, in contrast, which is earthly and stable, represents the recognition that we must submit to God's will and therefore remain focused on the physical realm in order to fulfill His plan for creation.

The challenge is to set our "coins" on "fire": to submit to our mission of bringing Divinity into the world with the same fiery enthusiasm we naturally experience in our anxious yearning for transcendence. Normally, we only get enthusiastic about what *we* want. Therefore, the only way we can "set our coins ablaze" is by calling upon the essence of our soul, the point of consciousness where we are a part of God Himself. When our own consciousness merges seamlessly with God's, we can infuse our submission to His will with fiery enthusiasm, for *His* desire has become synonymous with *our* desire.<sup>18</sup>

**Twenty gerah:** The half-shekel was an expression of Jewish unity—everyone, rich and poor alike, gave the same amount. Therefore, instead of simply saying, "give ten *gerah*," the Torah says that we must give "half of twenty *gerah*." We can only achieve unity when we all recognize that we are only halves. To be a complete shekel, we must unite with our fellow.

Similarly, we are also half in relation to God. The ten powers of the soul—our intellect and emotions—par-

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13. Numbers 1:3. 14. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 31, p. 216, note 41. 15. Below, 38:25. 16. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, p. 925, vol. 26, pp. 231-237. 17. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 16, p. 392. 18. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 180-181.

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17 ומליל יי עם משה למימר: 18 ותעביר ביורא דנחשא ובסיסה דנחשא לקדוש ותתן יתה בין משפן זמנא ובין מדבחא ותתן תמן מינא: 19 ויקדשון אהרן ובנוהי מנה ית ידיהון וית רגליהון: 20 במיעלהון למשפן זמנא קדשון מינא ולא ימותון או במקרבדון למדבחא לשמשא לאסקא קרבנא קדם יי: 21 ויקדשון ידיהון ורגליהון ולא ימותון ותהי להון קים עלם לה ולבנוהי לדריהון:

17 וידבר יהוה אל־משה לאמר: 18 ועשית ביור נחשת וכנו נחשת לרחצה ונתת אתו בין־אהל מועד ובין המזבח ונתת שמה מים: 19 ורחצו אהרן ובניו ממנו את־ידיהם ואת־רגליהם: 20 בבאם אל־אהל מועד ורחצו־מים ולא ימתו או בגשתם אל־המזבח לשרת להקטיר אשה ליהוה: 21 ורחצו ידיהם ורגליהם ולא ימתו והיתה להם חקעולם לו ולזרעו לדורתם: פ

— RASHI —

ורגליו. וכך שנינו בנבחים: כיצד קדוש ידים ורגלים? מניח ידו הימנית על גבי רגלו הימנית, וידו השמאלית על גבי רגלו השמאלית, ומקדש: 20 בבאם אל־אהל מועד. להקטיר שחרית ובין הערבים, או להוות מדם פר כהן המשיח ושעירי עבודה זרה: ולא ימתו. הא אם לא ירחצו — ימותו, שבתורה נאמרו כללות, ומכלל לאו אתה שומע הן: אל־המזבח. החיצון. שאין כאן ביאת אהל מועד, אלא בחצר: 21 ולא ימתו. לחיוב מיתה על המשמש במזבח ואינו רחוץ ידים ורגלים. שהמיתה הראשונה לא שמענו, אלא על הנכנס להיכל:

18 ביור. כמין דוד גדולה, ולה דדים המריקים ביהם מים: וכנו. בתרגומו "בסיסה" — מושב מתקן לכיור: לרחצה. מוסב על הכיור: ובין המזבח. מזבח העולה, שכתוב בו שהוא לפני פתח משפן אהל מועד. והיה הכיור משוף קמעא ועומד כנגד אייר שבין המזבח והמשכן, ואינו מפסיק כלל בינתיים, משום שנאמר: "ואת מזבח העלה שם פתח משפן אהל־מועד"<sup>24</sup>, כלומר, מזבח לפני אהל מועד ואין ביור לפני אהל מועד. הא כיצד? משוף קמעא כלפי הדרום. כך שנויה בנבחים: 19 את־ידיהם ואת־רגליהם. בבת אחת היה מקדש ידיו

15. שמות מ, כט. 16. ט, א. 17. יט, ב.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

begin the process of spiritual renewal, we must first cleanse ourselves of whatever residual materialism we may carry. (This is similar to the purification process the soul must undergo, when it leaves this material world at the end of life, to be able to enter Paradise. Our personal, spiritual paradise is our inner Tabernacle; we must cleanse ourselves of our worldliness when entering this spiritual paradise as well.) This is why the first furnishing one confronts when entering the Courtyard from the outside is the laver.

In a sense, this purification process begins when we are still outside the Tabernacle and involved in our mundane pursuits. Assuming that we are not doing anything forbidden, even our so-called "mundane" affairs can be entirely holy, and even help us ascend to advanced levels of spiritual consciousness, rather than dull our spiritual sensitivities. This idea was embodied in the very material out of which the laver was made.

The laver was made out of the mirrors the Jewish women donated for the construction of the Tabernacle, which they had used to arouse their husbands'

marital passion in Egypt.<sup>24</sup>

Inasmuch as spiritually, the laver signifies the necessity to rinse ourselves from even the slightest tinge of materialism before entering our inner Tabernacle, it seems incongruous that it was made out of the very mirrors that were used to draw attention to sensuality. Indeed, Moses originally wanted to reject this donation.<sup>25</sup>

The carnal urge is undoubtedly the archetypal lust of this world. Yet the fact that the laver was made from the Jewish women's mirrors teaches us not only that this act can be holy, but that it can even assist us in purifying ourselves of our worldly, materialistic, physical orientation.<sup>26</sup>

**21 The difference:** The purpose of washing our hands and feet is to cleanse our active faculties of any "dirt," i.e., of any orientation that could impede our effectiveness in raising and spreading Divine consciousness. Thus, washing prepares us for the task we are about to perform, focusing our mind, hands, and feet on its importance. [continues...]

24. Above, 1:14; below, 35:29. 25. Below, 35:29. 26. Reshimot 108.

## The Laver

17 **GOD spoke to Moses saying:**

18 **“You shall have the artisans make a copper Laver—a large pot with two spouts, and its copper base, for washing (see Figure 1). You shall place it between the Tent of Meeting and the outer Altar, i.e., east of the Tabernacle and west of the Altar. Place it south of the space opposite the entrance to the Tabernacle, so it does not interpose between the Tabernacle and the Altar (see Figure 2). You shall put water in it.**

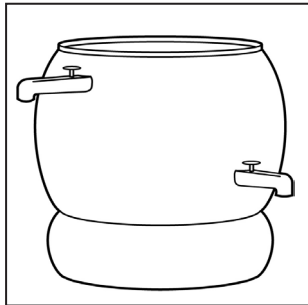


Figure 1: The Laver

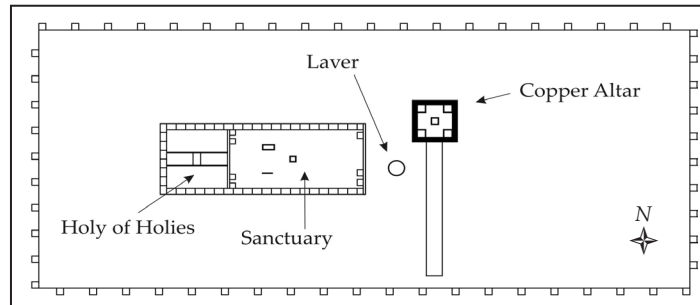


Figure 2: The Location of the Laver

19 **Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet from it.** They shall wash their hands and feet at the same time, by placing the right hand on the right foot, the left hand on the left foot, and while in this position, rinsing the right hand and foot and then the left hand and foot in the water running from the spout.

20 Entering the Tabernacle without having first washed in this manner is a capital offense.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, **they shall wash** in this manner **with water before they enter the Tent of Meeting**, i.e., twice daily—before they enter to burn the morning and afternoon incense<sup>21</sup> and perform their subsequent regular tasks<sup>22</sup>—and before they enter to perform other, occasional rites. **Thus they will not die.** Similarly, performing priestly functions on the outer Altar without having first washed this way is a capital offense, so **whenever they approach the outer Altar to serve as priests, i.e., to burn a fire-offering to God,**

21 **they shall first wash their hands and feet in this manner, and thus they will not die.** The difference between entering the Tent of Meeting and officiating on the Altar is that they must wash in order to *enter* the Tent of Meeting, no matter how many different services they perform there, while they must wash before each service they perform on the Altar.<sup>23</sup> **This shall be an everlasting statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their future generations.”**

### CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

18 **A copper laver:** As described above, the Tabernacle and its furnishings reflect the process of spiritual refinement we undergo as part of our ongoing aspiration toward unity with God.

When entering from the outside, one first went into the Courtyard, encountering the laver and the Outer Altar. On a personal level, when we leave our own affairs in order to enter our personal Tabernacle and

20. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 21, p. 219, note 30. 21. Above, 30:7. 22. Such as cleaning or lighting the Candelabrum, replacing the Showbread, etc. 23. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 21, pp. 214-221.

— ONKELOS —

22 ומיליל יי עם משה למימר:  
 23 ואת סב לך בסמין רישא  
 מירא דכיא מתקל חמש מאה  
 וקנמן בשם פלגותה מתקל מאתן  
 וחמשיין וקנה בסמא מתקל מאתן  
 וחמשיין: 24 וקציעתא מתקל  
 חמש מאה בסלעי קדשא ומשח  
 ויתא מלא הינא: 25 ותעביד  
 תה משח רבות קדשא בוסס  
 מבסס עובד בסמנו משח רבות  
 קדשא וזא: 26 ותרבי בה ית  
 משפן ומנא וית ארנא דסהדויתא:  
 27 וית פתורא וית כל-מנהי וית  
 מנתרא וית מנהא וית מדבא  
 דקטרת בסמניא: 28 וית מדבא  
 דעלתא וית כל-מנהי וית פירא  
 וית בסיסה: 29 ותקדש יתהון  
 ויהון קדש קדשיא כל-דיקרב  
 בהון יתקדש: 30 וית אהרן  
 וית בנהי תרבי ותקדש יתהון  
 לשמשא קדמי:

22 וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: 23 ואתה קח-  
 לך בשמים ראש מרדרור חמש מאות וקנמן  
 בשם מחציתו חמשים ומאתים וקנה-בשם חמשים  
 ומאתים: 24 וקנה חמש מאות בשקל הקדש ושמן  
 זית הזין: 25 ועשית אתו שמן משחת-קדש רקה  
 מרקחת מעשה רקה שמן משחת-קדש יהיה:  
 26 ומשחת בו את-אהל מועד ואת ארון העדת:  
 27 ואת-השלחן ואת-כל-כליו ואת-המנרה ואת-  
 כליה ואת מזבח הקטרת: 28 ואת-מזבח העלה  
 ואת-כל-כליו ואת-הביר ואת-כנו: 29 וקדשת  
 אתם והיו קדש קדשים כל-הנזע בהם יקדש:  
 30 ואת-אהרן ואת-בניו תמשח וקדשת אתם  
 לכהן לי:

— RASHI —

הים<sup>21</sup>, וכמו "רקע הארץ"<sup>22</sup>, שהטעם למטה. וכל-דבר  
 המערב בחרו עד שזה קופח מזה, או ריח או טעם,  
 קרוי "מקחת": רקה מקחת. רקה העשוי על ידי אמנות  
 ותערובות: מעשה רקה. שם האמן בדבר: 26 ומשחת  
 בו. כל-המשיחות כמין כ"ף ויניית, חוץ משל מלכים שהן  
 כמין גור: 29 וקדשת אתם. משיחה זו מקדשתם להיות  
 קדש קדשים. ומה-היא קדשתם? "כל-הנזע וגו"<sup>23</sup> —  
 כל-הראוי לכלי שרת, משנכנס לתוכו — קדוש קדשת  
 הגוף לפסל ביוצא, ולינה, וטבול יום, ואינו נפדה לצאת  
 לחליו. אבל דבר שאינו ראוי להם, אין מקדשין. ושנויה  
 היא משנה שלמה<sup>24</sup> אצל מוזבח: מתוך שנאמר: "כל-  
 הנגע במוזבח יקדש"<sup>25</sup>, שומע אני בין ראוי בין שאינו  
 ראוי? תלמוד לומר: "כבשים"<sup>26</sup> — מדה כבשים ראויים,  
 אף כל-ראוי. כל-משיחת משכן וכהנים ומלכים מתרגם  
 לשון רבוי, לפי שאין צורך משיחתן אלא לגדלה, כי  
 כן יסד המלך שזה חנוף גדלתו. ושאר משיחות, כגון:  
 רקיעין משהו<sup>27</sup>, "וראשית שמנים ומשחור"<sup>28</sup>, לשון  
 ארמית בהן כלשון עברית:

23 בשמים ראש. חשובים: וקנמן בשם. לפי שהקנמן  
 קלפת עץ הוא, יש שהוא טוב ויש בו ריח טוב וטעם,  
 ויש שאינו אלא כעץ, לכהן הצרף לומר: "קנמן בשם"  
 — מן הטוב: מחציתו חמשים ומאתים. מחצית הבאתו  
 תהא חמשים ומאתים: נמצא, כלו חמש מאות, כמו  
 שעור מרדרור. אם כן, למה נאמר בו "קציעין" גורת  
 הכתוב היא להביאו לחצאין, להרבות בו שתי הכרעות,  
 שאין שוקלין עין בעין. וכן שנויה בכריתות<sup>28</sup>: וקנה  
 בשם. קנה של בשם. לפי שיש קנים שאינן של בשם,  
 הצרף לומר "בשם": חמשים ומאתים. סף משקל כלו:  
 24 וקדה. שם שרש עשב. ובלשון חכמים<sup>29</sup>: "קציעה":  
 הזין. שנים עשר לגין. ונחלקו בו חכמי ישראל<sup>30</sup>: רבי  
 מאיר אומר: בו שלקף את העקרין. אמר לו רבי יהודה:  
 והלא לסוף את העקרין אינו ספק! אלא שראום במים  
 שלא יבלעו את השמן, ואחר כך הציף עליהם השמן  
 עד שקלט הריח, וקפחו לשמן מעל העקרין: 25 רקה  
 מקחת. "רקח" — שם דבר הוא, והטעם מוכיח שהוא  
 למעלה, והרי הוא כמו: "רקח" רגע, ואינו כמו "רגע

18. ה. א. 19. מעשרות ב. ו. 20. הרויות יא. ב. 21. ישעיה נא, טו. 22. ישעיה מב, ה. 23. שמות כט, לו. 24. זבחים פג, ב. 25. שמות כט, לו. 26. שם, לח. 27. עייף שם, ב. 28. עמוס ו, ו.

27. Likutei Sichot, vol. 16, pp. 394-401. 28. See above, 29:36. 29. See above, 29:2. 30. See Sefer HaSichot 5748, vol. 1, p. 287-288. 31. Likutei Sichot, vol. 26, p. 172, note 39. 32. See above, 28:41, 29:7, 21. 33. Likutei Sichot, vol. 21, pp. 221-222.

## The Anointing Oil

22 **God** then spoke to **Moses**, instructing him how to make the anointing oil, saying:

23 **“You shall take for yourself choice spices: 500 shekel-weights of pure myrrh; 500 shekel-weights of fragrant cinnamon in two half-portions, each amounting to 250 shekel-weights; 250 shekel-weights of aromatic cane;**

24 **and 500 shekel-weights of cassia, all of the sacred shekels; as well as a hin of olive oil.** Take two half-portions of cinnamon instead of one full portion so that, when the spices are weighed and a small extra amount is added to tip the scales, this will be done twice for the cinnamon.

25 **You shall make it into sacred anointing oil** in either of two ways: (a) by scalding the spices in the oil until they dissolve in it, or (b) by steeping the roots in water until they will be saturated with it and not absorb any oil, and then pouring the oil on the roots until it absorbs their scent, and draining it off the roots. The advantage of the first way is that the essence of the spices becomes part of the compound; the advantage of the second way is that the oil remains pure oil.<sup>27</sup> In either case, the oil produced will be a **blended compound as made by a perfumer**. When thus compounded, **it shall serve as oil for sacred anointment**.

26 **With it you shall anoint the Tent of Meeting; the Ark of the Tablets of the Testimony;**

27 **the Table and all its utensils; the Candelabrum and its utensils; the incense Altar;**

28 **the sacrificial, i.e., outer Altar and all its utensils;<sup>28</sup> and the Laver and its base.** You shall anoint all these by smearing anointing oil over them in the form of the Greek letter *lambda* ( $\Lambda$ ).<sup>29</sup>

29 **You shall sanctify them, making them become,** relative to the ordinary facets of creation,<sup>30</sup> **holy of holies.** By virtue of their holiness, **anything that touches them, i.e.,** is placed in any thus-sanctified container<sup>31</sup> **will itself become sanctified, i.e.,** it shall be liable to disqualification as a sacrifice in the same way that all sanctified objects are, and it may not be redeemed by money and thereby revert to its non-holy status. However, this sanctification-by-contact will occur only when an entity is placed in a vessel designed to contain it, i.e., when a liquid is placed in a vessel made to hold liquids and a dry good is placed in a vessel made to hold dry goods.

30 **You shall also anoint Aaron and his sons, and sanctify them to minister to Me as priests.**<sup>32</sup>

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✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

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When we are working on our “Outer Altar,” involved in elevating the material world, we need to “wash” before each separate foray into it, because we need to take extra precaution in order to be able to resist the constantly renewed draw of materiality.

On the other hand, when we have successfully passed this stage and are working on our “Inner Altar,” involved in enhancing our connection to God, it is

enough to “wash” once before each entry into this realm, no matter how many separate aspects of our inner lives we focus on while there.

The exception to this is when we enter in order to rectify something that has gone wrong in this inner realm, indicated by the need to apply the blood of some special sacrifice to the Inner Altar. In such a case, it is necessary to wash again.<sup>33</sup>



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31 ועם בני ישראל תמליל למימר משח רבות קדשא יהי דין קדמי לדריכו: 32 על בסרא דאנשא לא יתספ וברמותה לא תעבדון כותה קדשא הוא קדשא יהי לבון: 33 גבר די יבסס דכותה ודי יתן מנה על חילוני וישתיצי מעמה: 34 ואמר יי למשה סב לך בסמין נטופא וטפרא והלבנתא בסמין ולבנתא דכיתא מחקל במחקל יהי:

31 ואל בני ישראל תדבר לאמר שָׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת־קֹדֶשׁ יְהִיָּה זֶה לִי לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם: 32 עַל־בֶּשֶׂר אָדָם לֹא יִסָּד וּבְמַתְכַנְתּוֹ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ כָמֹהוּ קֹדֶשׁ הוּא קֹדֶשׁ יְהִיָּה לָכֶם: 33 אִישׁ אִשֶׁר יִרְקַח כָּמֹהוּ וְאִשֶׁר יִתֵּן מִמֶּנּוּ עַל־זֶרַע וְנִכְרַת מֵעַמּוֹ: ׀

34 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה קַח־לְךָ סָמִים נָטָף וּשְׁחַלְתָּ וְחִלְבַנְתָּ סָמִים וּלְבַנְתָּ זָכָה בַד בָּבַד יְהִיָּה:

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בין סממני הקטרת, ללמדנו שלא יקל בעינינו לצרף עמנו באגדת תעניויותינו ותפלותנו את פושעי ישראל, שיהיו נמנין עמנו: סמנים. אחרים: ולבנה זכה. מכאן למדו רבותינו: אחד עשר סממנין נאמרו לו למשה בסיני: מעוט "סמנים" – שנים, "נטף ושחלת וחלבנה" – שלשה, הרי חמשה. "סמנים" – לרבות עוד כמו אלו, הרי עשרה. "ולבנה" – הרי אחד עשר. ואלו הן: הצרי והצפרן, החלבנה והלבונה, מר וקציעה, שבלת נרד וכרכם – הרי שמונה, שהשבלת ונרד אחד, שהנרד דומה לשבלת. הקשט והקלופה והקנמון, הרי אחד עשר. בורית כרשינה אינו נקטר, אלא בו שפין את הצפרן ללבנה שתהא נאה: בד בבד יהיה. אלו הארבעה הנזכרים כאן, יהיו שוין משקל במשקל, כמשקלו של זה כפ משקלו של זה. וכן שנינו: הצרי והצפרן, החלבנה והלבונה – משקל שבועים, שבועים מנה. ולשון "בד", נראה בעיני שהוא לשון יחיד – אחד באחד יהיה, זה כמו זה:

31 לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם. מכאן למדו רבותינו<sup>39</sup> לומר, שכלו קים לעתיד לבא: זה. בגמטריא תריסר לגין הו: 32 לא יספ. בשני יודין, לשון "לא יפעל", כמו: "למען ייטב לך"<sup>40</sup>: על־בשר אדם לא יספ. מן השמן הזה עצמו: ובמתכנתו לא תעשו כמהו. בסכום סממניו לא תעשו אחר כמוהו במשקל סממניו הולו לפי מדת הין שמן. אבל אם פחת או רבה סממניו לפי מדת הין שמן – מתר. ואף העשוי במתכנתו של זה, אין הסף ממנו חיב אלא הרוקחו: ובמתכנתו. לשון השבון, כמו: "מתכנת הלבנים"<sup>41</sup>. וכן "במתכנתה"<sup>42</sup> של קטרת: 33 ואשר יתן ממנו. מאותו של משה: על־זר. שאינו צרף כהנה ומלכות: 34 נטף. הוא צרי, ועל שאינו אלא שרף הנוטף מעצי הקטף קרוי "נטף", ובלעז גומ"א<sup>43</sup> והצרי קורין לו תירייק"א<sup>44</sup>: ושחלת. שרש בשם חלק ומצהיר בצפרן. ובלשון המשנה<sup>45</sup> קרוי "צפרן", וזהו שתרגם אנקלוס: "וטופרא": וחלבנה. בשם שריחו רע, וקורין לו גלבנ"א. ומנאה הכתוב

39. הוריות יא, ב. 30. דברים ו, יח. 31. שמות ה, ח. 32. פסוק לו. 33. שרף של אילן. 34. תרקה - סס מרפא. 35. כריתות ו, ב. 36. שם ו, א. 37. כריתות ו, א.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

to every Jew without exception. If we exclude sinners in the course of our communal process of repentance and atonement, we are being hypocritical; our efforts are doomed to failure. It is only by recognizing that the very same path of repentance is open to every Jew that we can hope to actualize the message of the incense and properly rejuvenate our relationship with God.<sup>41</sup>

According to Maimonides, the purpose of the incense was to neutralize the foul odor of the meat that was slaughtered for the sacrifices.<sup>42</sup> This would seem to contradict the sublime meanings ascribed to the incense as given above. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi

explained the apparent discrepancy as follows:

When someone brought a sacrifice to atone for a sin, he first had to repent in order for the sacrifice to effect atonement. But sometimes people did not repent fully, and then some of the foulness of their sin still remained. The incense, by manifesting the Jew's sublime levels of connection to God, served to neutralize this foulness.<sup>43</sup>

This function of the incense is alluded to by its components. The fact that some of its constituent spices were inedible, non-kosher, and foul-smelling indicates that it was intended to elevate even the lowest elements of life.<sup>44</sup>

41. Hitva'aduyot 5747, vol. 2, pp. 558-559. 42. Moreh Nevuchim 3:45. 43. Shemu'ot VeSipurim, vol. 2, #82 (p. 69). 44. Likutei Sichot, vol. 5, pp. 401-402.

**31 You shall speak to the Israelites and say: ‘This shall be the sacred anointing oil for Me throughout your future generations.** No matter how much of it is used, its quantity will miraculously remain the same. You shall also use it to anoint kings,<sup>34</sup> but you shall anoint them by pouring the oil over them in the form of a crown.<sup>35</sup>

**32 Nonetheless, it may not be applied to the skin of any unauthorized person, nor may you make anything like it using the same proportions** of spices to oil; this oil is sacred, and it shall remain restricted solely for sacred purposes for you.

**33 Whoever makes an identical blend, or puts any of the oil that Moses will make onto an unauthorized person, will be cut off from his people** by dying prematurely and childless.’<sup>36</sup>

### The Incense

**34 God then said to Moses,** instructing him how to make the incense: **“Take for yourself two fragrant spices—myrrh and cassia; plus stacte, onycha, and galbanum; plus five more fragrant spices—spikenard, saffron, costus, aromatic bark, and cinnamon; and pure frankincense. There shall be an equal weight** of the four main spices: stacte, onycha, galbanum, and frankincense. Take 70 *maneh* each of these, plus 16 *maneh* of myrrh, cassia, spikenard, and saffron, 12 *maneh* of costus, 3 *maneh* of aromatic bark, and 9 *maneh* of cinnamon. These quantities shall suffice for a year’s use. The fact that galbanum is included even though it has a displeasing odor teaches you that you should not exclude wrongdoers from participating in public prayer.

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#### ∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

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**34 The incense:** The incense was offered on the Inner Altar, which expresses the inner yearnings of the heart.<sup>37</sup> The previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch, was once discussing the significance of the Temple service in the inner life of the Jew. In describing the incense, he said, “The incense offering was not merely burning a mixture of spices on the Altar. One had to be familiar with all its eleven ingredients, to know what quantities were required of each, which of them had to be pounded and which had to be ground.... [Nowadays,] stories told about *tzadikim* provide such preparation.”<sup>38</sup>

**Galbanum:** As was mentioned previously,<sup>39</sup> this foul-smelling herb alludes to the wrongdoers among our people, who, despite their repugnant behavior, are still an indispensable part of the Jewish nation, just as Galbanum was an essential ingredient of the incense. In this vein, our sages teach us that any public prayer or fast that excludes sinners will prove ineffectual.

In fact, the ingredients of the spices included even forbidden spices. The myrrh (*mor*) was actually the

blood of a non-kosher wild animal from India.<sup>40</sup>

The incense expressed the intrinsic connection between God and the Jewish people, which can be neither severed nor sullied. This essential connection does not merely *allow* the inclusion of those who have gone astray; it *demand*s it. If either the foul-smelling spice or the non-kosher one was omitted, the entire mixture was invalid.

The same is true of repentance, which we express through fasting. When repenting, we ask God to overlook or forgive our sins in response to our efforts to tap into our deepest and most essential connection with Him, which never loses its purity. By getting in touch with this aspect of our souls, referred to in Kabbalah as the *yechidah* (“single one”), we are able to rise above our past misdeeds and the separation that they caused between God and us. We learn to consciously relate to the level of reality in which we never truly went astray, for our *yechidah*’s intrinsic relationship with its source is unwavering.

Clearly, the same essential connection to God belongs

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34. See Deuteronomy 17:14-20. 35. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 26, p. 245. 36. See above, 12:19. 37. See above, on 30:10. 38. *Likutei Diburim* 26:1 (488a). 39. On 30:1, above. 40. *Mishneh Torah, Kelei HaMikdash* 1:3. See also *Hasagot HaRa’avad ad loc.*, who disagrees.



— ONKELOS —

35 ותעביד יתה קטרת בסמין  
 בוסס עובד בסמנו מערב דכי  
 קדשא: 36 ותשחוק מנה ותדק  
 ותמן מנה קדם סהדויתא במשפן  
 זמנא די אומין מימרי לה תמן  
 קדש קדשין תהי לכוז: 37 וקטרת  
 בסמין די תעביד בךמותה לא  
 תעבדון לכוז קדשא תהי לה  
 קדם יי: 38 גבר די יעביד דכותה  
 לארחא בה וישתיצי מעמה:  
 31:1 ומליל יי עם משה למימרי:  
 2 חזי דרביתי בשום בצלאל בר  
 אורי בר חור לשבטא דיהודה:  
 3 ואשלימית עמה רוחא מן  
 קדם יי בחכמתא ובסכלתנו  
 ובמדע ובכל-עבידא: 4 לאלפא  
 אמנון למעבד בדהבא ובכספא  
 ובנחשא: 5 ובאמנות אבן טבא  
 לאשלמא ובנגרות אעא למעבד  
 בכל-עבידא: 6 ואנא הא יקבית  
 עמה ית אהליאב בר אחיסמך  
 לשבטא דין ובלב כל-חבמי לביא  
 יקבית חכמתא ויעבדון ית כל-די  
 פקידתך: 7 ית משפן זמנא וית  
 ארונא לטהרותא וית כפרתא די  
 עלוהי וית כל-מני משכנא: 8 וית  
 פתורא וית מנוחי וית מנרתא  
 דכיתא וית כל-מנהא וית מדבא  
 דקטרת בסמין:

35 וְעָשִׂיתָ אֹתָהּ קִטְרֵת רִקְחַ מַעֲשֵׂה רִוְקָה מִמֶּלֶחַ  
 טָהוֹר קָדֵשׁ: 36 וְשִׁחֲקֵת מִמֶּנָּה הַדֶּק וְנִתְּתָה מִמֶּנָּה  
 לִפְנֵי הָעֵדֻת בְּאֵהֶל מוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר אֲוַעֵד לְךָ שָׁמָּה  
 קָדֵשׁ קָדָשִׁים תִּהְיֶה לָכֶם: 37 וְהַקְטַרְתָּ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה  
 בְּמִתְכַנְתָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂוּ לָכֶם קָדֵשׁ תִּהְיֶה לְךָ לַיהוָה:  
 38 אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה כְמוֹהָ לְהָרִיחַ בָּהּ וְנִכְרַת

מַעֲמֹו: 8

31:1 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 2 רְאֵה קָרָאתִי  
 בְּשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל בֶּן-אוּרִי בֶן-חֹר וְלִמְטָה יְהוּדָה:  
 3 וְאַמְלֵא אֹתוֹ רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בְּחַכְמָה וּבִתְבוּנָה  
 וּבְדַעַת וּבְכָל-מְלָאכָה: 4 לְחָשֵׁב מַחֲשַׁבֹּת לַעֲשׂוֹת  
 בְּזָהָב וּבַכֶּסֶף וּבְנַחֲשֵׁת: 5 וּבְחַרְשֵׁת אֲבָן לְמִלְאֵת  
 וּבְחַרְשֵׁת עֵץ לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּכָל-מְלָאכָה: 6 וְאַנִּי הִנֵּה  
 נֹתְתִי אֹתוֹ אֶת אֶהֱלִיאָב בֶּן-אֲחִיסָמֵךְ לְמַטֵּה־דָן  
 וּבְלֵב כָּל-חַכְמֵי-לֵב נֹתְתִי חַכְמָה וְעֲשֶׂוּ אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר  
 צִוִּיתִךָ: 7 אֵת אֵהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֵת-הָאָרֶץ לַעֲדֹת וְאֵת-  
 הַכִּפְּרֵת אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו וְאֵת כָּל-כְּלֵי הָאֵהֶל: 8 וְאֵת-הַשִּׁלְחָן  
 וְאֵת-כְּלָיו וְאֵת-הַמִּנְחָה הַטְּהֻרָה וְאֵת-כָּל-כְּלֵיהָ וְאֵת  
 מִזְבַּח הַקְטָרֶת:

— RASHI —

**בשם.** לעשות מלאכתו, את בצלאל: 3 **בחכמה.** מה-  
 שאדם שומע מאחרים ולמד: **ובתבונה.** מבין דבר  
 מלבדו, מתוך דברים שלמד: **ובדעת.** רוח הקדש:  
 4 **לחשב מחשבות.** אריגת מעשה חשב: 5 **ובחרשת.**  
 לשון אמנות, כמו "חרש" "חכם". ואנאלוס פרש ושנה  
 בפרוש, שחרש אבנים קרוי "אמן", וחרש עץ קרוי  
 "נגר": **למלאות.** להושיבה במשפצת שלה במלואה,  
 לעשות המשפצת למדת מושב האבן ועבדה: 6 **ובלב**  
**כל-חכמי לב וגו'.** ועוד שאר חכמי לב שבכם, וכל  
 אשר נתתי בו חכמה — ועשו את כל-אשר צויתך:  
 7 **ואת-הארץ לעדות.** לצרף לוחות העדות: 8 **הטהרה.**  
 על שם זהב טהור:

35 **ממלח.** בתרגומו מערב, שיערב שחיקתו יפה יפה,  
 זה עם זה. ואומר אני, שדומה לו: "וייראו המלחים"<sup>38</sup>,  
 "מלחין וחבלין"<sup>39</sup>, על שם שמהפכין את המים  
 במשטות בשמנהיגים את הספינה, כאדם המהפך  
 בכה ביצים טרופות לערבן עם המים. וכל-דבר שאדם  
 רוצה לערב יפה יפה, מהפכו באצבע או בכוף: **ממלח**  
**טהור קדש.** ממלח יהיה, וטהור יהיה, וקדש יהיה:  
 36 **ונתתה ממונה וגו'.** היא קטרת שבכל-יום ויום, שעל  
 המזבח הפנימי שהוא באהל מועד: **אשר אועד לה שמה.**  
 כל-מועדי דבור שאקבע לה, אני קובעם לאותו מקום:  
 37 **במתכנתה.** במנין סממניה: **קדש תהיה לה לה'.**  
 שלא תעשנה אלא לשמי: 38 **להריח בה.** אכל עושה  
 אתה במתכנתה משלך כדי למכרה לצבור: 2 **קראתי**

38. יונה א, ה. 39. יחזקאל כז, כז.

**35 You shall make these ingredients into incense, a compound blended as by a perfumer, well mingled.** Take care that the compound remain **pure**, i.e., undefiled, **and** purchase the ingredients from the treasury of the Tabernacle, so that the incense be **holy**.<sup>45</sup>

**36 You shall grind some of it very finely, and place some of it twice daily on the incense Altar,**<sup>46</sup> which is situated **in front of the Ark of Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you.**<sup>47</sup> The incense **shall be holy of holies for you.**

**37 You shall not make incense for yourselves in the same proportions as you will make for Me;** this formula **shall be holy for you unto God**, i.e., reserved exclusively for making sacred incense.

**38 Whoever makes an identical compound for personal purposes, such as in order to smell its fragrance, will be cut off from his people** by dying prematurely and childless."<sup>48</sup>

### **Betzalel and Oholiav**

**31:1 God spoke to Moses, saying:**

**2** "Regarding who should oversee the work of building the Tabernacle and its accoutrements, **I have singled out by name Betzalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.**

**3 I have endowed him with a Divine spirit, with wisdom,** the ability to learn from others as well as on his own, **with deductive understanding, with Divine inspiration, and with the talent for all types of craftsmanship—**

**4 to devise woven designs and to work in gold, silver and copper—**

**5 and with the art of setting gems and carving wood, and all kinds of crafts.**

**6 Moreover, I have assigned with him Oholiav son of Achisamach, of the tribe of Dan, and I have endowed every wise-hearted person with similar wisdom, so that they may make everything that I have commanded you:**

**7 the Tent of Meeting, the Ark for the Tablets of the Testimony and the Cover upon it, and all the implements for the Tent of Meeting;**

**8 the Table and its utensils, the pure gold Candelabrum and all its utensils, and the incense Altar;**

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#### ⌘ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ⌘

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**38 Whoever makes an identical compound in order to smell its fragrance will be cut off from his people:** As explained above, the incense expressed the intrinsic connection between God and the Jewish people. In this light, the Ba'al Shem Tov interpreted this verse as follows:

*Whoever makes an identical compound:* If a person pretends to be connected to God, but he is only doing so—

*In order to smell its fragrance:* i.e., in order that others should take note and admire him for it, such a person—

*Will be cut off from his people.*<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45.</sup> *Maskil LeDavid.* <sup>46.</sup> Above, 30:7. <sup>47.</sup> Above, on 29:42-43. <sup>48.</sup> See above, 12:19. <sup>49.</sup> *Keter Shem Tov* 185.

— ONKELOS —

9 וְיִתְּ מַדְבָּחָא דְעֵלְתָא וְיִתְּ כֵלִי־מְנוּחֵי וְיִתְּ בִּיּוֹרָא וְיִתְּ בְּסִיסָה: 10 וְיִתְּ לְבוּשֵׁי שְׂמוּשָׂא וְיִתְּ לְבוּשֵׁי קִדְשָׁא לְאַהֲרֹן כְּהֵנָּה וְיִתְּ לְבוּשֵׁי בְּנוֹהֵי לְשִׁמְשָׂא: 11 וְיִתְּ מִשְׁחָא דְרִבּוּתָא וְיִתְּ קִטְרֵת בְּסַמֵּיא לְקִדְשָׁא כְּכֹל־דֵּי פְקִידָתָךְ יַעֲבֹדוּן: 12 וְאָמַר יְיָ לְמֹשֶׁה לְמִימְרֵי: 13 וְאֵת מְלִיל עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִימְרֵי בְּרַם יֵת יוֹמֵי שְׂבִיֵּיא דִּילִי תִסְרוּן אַרְי אֵת הִיא בִּין מִימְרֵי וּבִינִיכּוֹן לְדִרְיִכוֹן לְמֹדַע אַרְי אֲנָא יְיָ מְקִדְשָׁכוֹן: 14 וְתִסְרוּן יֵת שְׁבֵתָא אַרְי קִדְשָׁא הִיא לְכוֹן דִּיחִלְפָּה אֲתַקְטָלָא יִתְקַטִּיל אַרְי כֹּל־דֵּי־עֵבִיד בַּה עֵבִידְתָּא וְיִשְׁתִּיבֵי אֲנִשָׂא הַהוּא מִגּוֹ עַמּוּהָ: 15 שְׁתָּא יוֹמִין תִּתְעַבֵּיד עֵבִידְתָּא וּבִיּוֹמָא שְׂבִיֵּיעָאָה שְׁבֵת שְׁבֵתָא קִדְשָׁא קֳדָם יְיָ כֹּל־דֵּי־עֵבִיד עֵבִידְתָּא בִּיּוֹמָא דְשְׁבֵתָא אֲתַקְטָלָא יִתְקַטִּיל:

9 וְאֶת־מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־כְּלֵי־בַיִת וְאֶת־הַבִּיּוֹר וְאֶת־כְּלֵי־מְנוּחֵי: 10 וְאֶת־בְּגָדֵי הַשְּׂרָד וְאֶת־בְּגָדֵי הַקִּדְשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶת־בְּגָדֵי בָנָיו לְכַהֵן: 11 וְאֶת־שִׁמּוֹן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְאֶת־קִטְרֵת הַסַּמִּים לְקִדְשׁ כָּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־צִוִּיתְךָ יַעֲשׂוּ: פ 12 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 13 וְאֵתָּה דַבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אַךְ אֶת־שְׁבֵתַתִּי תִשְׁמְרוּ כִּי אֹת הוּא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם לְדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקִדְשְׁכֶם: 14 וְשִׁמְרֶתֶם אֶת־הַשְּׁבֵת כִּי קִדְשׁ הוּא לְכֶם מִחֻלְלֶיהָ מוֹת יוֹמֵת כִּי כֹל־הָעֹשֶׂה בָּהּ מְלֹאכָה וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מִקֶּרֶב עַמּוּהָ: 15 שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים יַעֲשֶׂה מְלֹאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שְׁבֵת שְׁבֵתוֹן קִדְשׁ לַיהוָה כֹּל־הָעֹשֶׂה מְלֹאכָה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבֵת מוֹת יוֹמֵת:

— RASHI —

מְלֹאכַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אֵל יִקַּל בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְדַחֹת אֶת הַשְּׁבֵת מִפְּנֵי אוֹתָהּ מְלֹאכָה: אַךְ אֶת־שְׁבֵתַתִּי תִשְׁמְרוּ. אֶת־עַל־פִּי שֶׁתִּהְיוּ רְדוּפִין וְרוֹרִיזִין בְּרוֹרִיזוֹת מְלֹאכָה — שְׁבֵת אֵל תִּדְחַח מִפְּנֵיהָ. כֹּל־"אֲכִין" וְ"רִקִּין" מֵעוּטִין — לְמַעַט שְׁבֵת מִמְלֹאכַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן: כִּי אֹת הוּא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם. אוֹת גְּדוּלָּה הִיא בֵּינֵינוּ שְׁבֻחָתִי בְּכֶם, בְּהִנְחִילִי לְכֶם אֵת יוֹם מְנוּחָתִי לְמְנוּחָה: לְדַעַת. הָאֲמוֹת בָּהּ "כִּי אֲנִי ה' מְקִדְשְׁכֶם": 14 מוֹת יוֹמֵת. אִם יֵשׁ עֲדִים וְהִתְרָאָה: וְנִכְרְתָה. כֹּל־הַתְּרָאָה: מִחֻלְלֶיהָ. הַנוֹחֵג בָּהּ חָל בְּקִדְשָׁתָהּ: 15 שְׁבֵת שְׁבֵתוֹן. מְנוּחָת מְרֻגּוּעַ, וְלֹא מְנוּחָת עֵרָאִי: שְׁבֵת שְׁבֵתוֹן. לְכַךְ כִּפְלוּ הַכְּתוּב, לֹאֲמַר שְׂאִסוּר בְּכֹל־מְלֹאכָה אֶפְלוּ אֲכָל נֶפֶשׁ, וְכֵן יוֹם־הַכַּפּוּרִים שְׂנֵאָמַר בוֹ: "שְׁבֵת שְׁבֵתוֹן הוּא לְכֶם"<sup>45</sup>, אִסוּר בְּכֹל־מְלֹאכָה. אֲבָל יוֹם טוֹב לֹא נֵאָמַר בוֹ כִּי אִם: "בַּיּוֹם הָרֵאשׁוֹן שְׁבֵתוֹן, וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי שְׁבֵתוֹן"<sup>46</sup> — אִסוּרִים בְּכֹל־מְלֹאכַת עֲבוּדָה, וּמִתְרִים בְּמְלֹאכַת אֲכָל נֶפֶשׁ: קִדְשׁ לַה'. שְׁמִירַת קִדְשָׁתָהּ לְשִׁמִּי וּבְמִצְוֹתֵי:

10 וְאֵת בְּגָדֵי הַשְּׂרָד. אוֹמֵר אֲנִי: לְפִי פְּשׁוּטוֹ שֶׁל מְקָרָא שְׂאִי אֶפְשָׁר לֹאֲמַר שְׂבֻבְגִיד כְּהֵנָּה מְדַבֵּר, לְפִי שְׂנֵאָמַר אֲצֻלֵם: "וְאֶת־בְּגָדֵי הַקִּדְשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וְאֶת־בְּגָדֵי בָנָיו לְכַהֵן". אֵלָּא, אֵלּוּ "בְּגָדֵי הַשְּׂרָד" הֵם בְּגָדֵי הַתְּכַלֵּת וְהָאֲרָגְמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי, הָאֲמֹרִים בְּפִרְשַׁת מִסְעוֹת: "וְנִתְּנוּ אֶל־בְּגַד תְּכַלְתִּי"<sup>40</sup>, "וּפְרָשׁוּ עֲלָיו בְּגַד אֲרָגְמָן"<sup>41</sup>, "וּפְרָשׁוּ עֲלֵיהֶם בְּגַד תוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי"<sup>42</sup>. וְנִרְאִין דְּבָרֵי, שְׂנֵאָמַר: "וּמִן־הַתְּכַלְתִּי וְהָאֲרָגְמָן וְתוֹלַעַת הַשָּׁנִי עָשׂוּ בְּגָדֵי־שְׂרָד לְשֵׁרֵת בְּקִדְשִׁי"<sup>43</sup>, וְלֹא הִזְכִּיר "שֵׁשׁ" עַמּוּהָ. וְאִם בְּבְגָדֵי כְּהֵנָּה מְדַבֵּר — לֹא מִצִּינוּ בְּאֲחֻד מֵהֶם אֲרָגְמָן אוֹ תוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי כֹּל־שֵׁשׁ: בְּגָדֵי הַשְּׂרָד. יֵשׁ מִפְּרָשִׁים לְשׁוֹן עֲבוּדָה וְשֵׁרֵת, כְּתִרְגוּמוֹ: "לְבוּשֵׁי שְׂמוּשָׂא", וְאִין לֹא דְמִיּוֹן בְּמִקְרָא. וְאֲנִי אוֹמֵר, שְׁהוּא לְשׁוֹן אֲרָמֵי כְּתִרְגוּם שֶׁל "קְלָעִים" וְתִרְגוּם שֶׁל "מְכַבֵּר", שְׁהִיוּ אֲרוּגִים בְּמַחַט, עֲשׂוּיִים נְקִבִים נְקִבִים, לְצִידֵי־יָץ בְּלַעֲזוֹ"<sup>44</sup>: 11 וְאֶת־קִטְרֵת הַסַּמִּים לְקִדְשׁ. לְצִרְף הַקִּטְרֵת הַהִיכָל שְׁהוּא קִדְשׁ: 13 וְאֵתָּה דַבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאֵתָּה, אֶת־עַל־פִּי שְׁהִפְקִדְתִּיךָ לְצִוּוֹתֶם עַל

40. במדבר ד, יב. 41. שם, יג. 42. שם, ח. 43. שמות לט, א. 44. נֶשֶׁת. 45. ויקרא טו, לא. 46. ויקרא כב, לט.

50. These are mentioned in Numbers 4:6-14. 51. Eirubin 54b; Rashi on 34:32, below and on Numbers 30:2. 52. Above, on 25:1. 53. Likutei Sichot, vol. 26, p. 257-260. 54. See above, 12:19.

9 **the sacrificial, outer Altar and all its utensils, and the Laver and its base;**  
 10 **the netted packing cloths for the furnishings,<sup>50</sup> the sacred vestments for Aaron the priest, and the vestments of his sons for their service as priests;**  
 11 **and the anointing oil and the spice incense for burning in the Sanctuary. According to all that I have commanded you, so shall they do.”**

### **The Sabbath**

12 **God said to Moses as follows:**

13 “When you descend from Mount Sinai, there are two ways in which you will convey My teachings to the people. In most cases, you will first explain the particular subject to Aaron by himself. Aaron will then sit at your left, his sons will enter, and you will repeat the same lesson for them. They will then sit to your right and Aaron’s left; the princes will enter and you will repeat the same lesson for them. The princes will then sit at the sides; the rest of the people will enter and you will repeat the same lesson for them. You will then leave, and Aaron will repeat the lesson for everyone else. Then Aaron will leave, and his sons will repeat the lesson for the princes and the people. Then his sons will leave, and the princes will repeat the lesson for the people. Thus, everyone will hear the lesson four times.<sup>51</sup> However, you will not give the instructions for fashioning the Tabernacle and all its accoutrements in this way. Instead, you will gather all the people together at once, and teach them all at the same time. Now, because I am telling you to convey these teachings in an exceptional manner, **you** might think that working on the Tabernacle is so important that it overrides the prohibition of work on the Sabbath. Therefore, **speak to the Israelites** in the same exceptional, public forum as you deliver the instructions for the Tabernacle **and say to them:** ‘Anxious as you may be to complete the Tabernacle—inasmuch as it expresses how God has forgiven you the sin of the Golden Calf<sup>52</sup>—**you shall nevertheless observe My Sabbaths** carefully, and not let your enthusiasm for building the Tabernacle lead you to inadvertently desecrate the Sabbath.<sup>53</sup> **For the Sabbath is a sign** for all other nations of the special relationship **between Me and you, throughout your generations,** in that I have appointed as your day of rest the same day of the week that I rested on when I created the world. In this way, the other nations are **to know that** it is none other than **I, God, who sanctifies you.**

14 **You shall** therefore **observe the Sabbath for it is holy for you. Those who desecrate it** by treating it like any other day and doing any forbidden type of work **must be put to death** by the court, provided there are witnesses who saw the individuals desecrate it and warned them not to do so beforehand. **For** if no such witnesses exist, **the soul of anyone who does work on that day will be cut off** by Me **from the midst of its people,** i.e., he will die prematurely and childless.<sup>54</sup>

15 **Work may be done for six days, but on the seventh day** there shall be **an absolute rest from work,** i.e., not a rest due to fatigue or a rest due to boredom or idleness, but a rest that is **holy**—that is, dedicated—**to God.** This is why **whoever does work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.**

ONKELOS  
 16 וַיְטַרְוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵת שְׁבֻתָא לְמַעְבַּד יֵת שְׁבֻתָא לְדְרִיהוֹן קָדָם עֲלָם: 17 בֵּין מִימְרֵי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת הִיא לְעֲלָם אָרִי שְׁתָא יוֹמִין עֶבֶד יֵי יֵת שְׁמִיָא וַיֵּת אֲרַעָא וּבִיּוֹמָא שְׁבִיעָאָה שְׁבֻת וְנַח: 18 וַיְהִי לְמַשָּׁה פֶד שִׁיעִי לְמַלְלָא עֵמָה בְּטוֹרָא דְסִינֵי תְרִין לוֹחֵי סְהוּדָתָא לוֹחֵי אֲבָנָא כְּתִיבִין בְּאַצְבָּעָא דִּי:

16 וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדָרְתָם כְּרִית עוֹלָם: 17 בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹת הוּא לְעֲלָם כִּי־שִׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנְפֹשׁ: 8  
 שְׁנֵי 18 וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כְּכֹלֹתוֹ לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ בְּהַר סִינַי שְׁנֵי לַחַת הָעֵדוּת לַחַת אֲבָן כְּתוּבִים בְּאַצְבָּע אֱלֹהִים:

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בְּאֶחָד בְּנִיטוֹ: כְּכֹלֹתוֹ. כְּתִיב חֶסֶר, שְׁנִמְסָרָה לֹא תוֹרָה בְּמַתְנֶה כְּכֹלָה לַחֲתוֹ, שְׁלֵא הָיָה יָכֹל לְלַמֵּד כְּלָה בְּזִמְנָא מוֹעֵט כְּזֶה. דְּבַר אַחֵר: מִדֵּי־כְלָה מְתַקְּשֵׁת בְּעֲשָׂרִים וְאַרְבָּעָה קְשׁוּטִין, הֵן הָאֲמֹרִים בְּסִפְרָא יִשְׁעִיָּה<sup>68</sup>, אִף תְּלִמִיד חֶכֶם צָרִיךְ לְהִיטֵי בְּעֲשָׂרִים וְאַרְבָּעָה סְפָרִים: לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ. חֶקֶקִים וְהַמְשַׁפְּטִים שְׁבִי־וְאֵלָה הַמְשַׁפְּטִים: לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ. מְלַמֵּד שְׁהָיָה מֹשֶׁה שׁוֹמֵעַ מִפִּי הַגְּבוּרָה, וְחוֹזְרִין וְשׁוֹנִין אֵת הַהֲלָכָה שְׁנִיָּהּ יְחַד: לַחַת. לַחַת כְּתִיב, שְׁהָיָה שְׁתִּיָּהּ שׁוֹת:

17 וַיִּנְפֹשׁ. כְּתַרְגוּמוֹ: "וַיִּנְחַ". וְכֹל־לְשׁוֹן נוֹפֵשׁ הוּא לְשׁוֹן נִפְשׁ, שְׁמַשִּׁיב נִפְשׁוֹ וְנִשְׁמִיתוּ בְּהִרְגִיעוֹ מִטוֹרַח הַמְּלָאכָה. וְמִי שְׁכָתוּב בּוֹ: "לֹא יִיעַף וְלֹא יִיָּגַע"<sup>69</sup>, וְכֹל־פָּעֵלוֹ בְּמַאֲמָר, הַכְּתִיב מְנוּחָה לְעַצְמוֹ לְשִׁבְרֵי הָאֶזְנוֹן מִדֵּי שְׁהִיא יְכוּלָה לְשָׁמֵעַ: 18 וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְגו'. אֵין מְקַדֵּם וּמְאוּחָר בְּתוֹרָה — מַעֲשֵׂה הָעֶגְלָה קָדָם לְצוּי מְלָאכָת הַמְּשָׁכָן, יָמִים רַבִּים הָיָה, שְׁהָרִי בִי"ו בְּתַמּוּז נִשְׁתַּבְּרוּ הַלוּחֹת, וּבַיּוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים נִתְרַצָּה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ־הוּא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, וְלִמְחִירַת הַתְּחִילוֹ בְּנִדְבַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְהוֹקֵם

47. ישעיה מ, כח. 48. ג, יחכד. 49. שופטים ה, כח. 50. שופטים ג, כח. 51. פט, א. 52. להלן פסוק ו.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

Notwithstanding, the Torah mentions "protecting" the Sabbath before "making" it. This means that we draw the power to "make" the Sabbath (by preparing for it during the preceding week) from "protecting" the preceding Sabbath. The more spiritual we try to be on any particular Sabbath, the better we will be able to spiritualize our lives during the ensuing week, which in turn increases our spiritual experience of the following Sabbath.<sup>68</sup> Yet another meaning of the word for "observe" is "anticipate" and "await."<sup>69</sup> In this sense, the Torah bids us to look forward to the arrival of the Sabbath the whole week. Together with actively preparing for the Sabbath spiritually during the work-week, we should also eagerly await the heightened Divine consciousness we hope to experience on the holy day. This joyful anticipation is an essential aspect of our spiritual preparations.<sup>70</sup>

18 When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two Tablets of the Testimony: God finished teaching Moses and gave him the tablets on the fortieth day of his stay on the mountain.

But, as we will soon see, the people had already made the Golden Calf on the thirty-ninth day! In other words, even after the people committed this most heinous sin, God continued to teach Moses the Torah and gave him the tablets in order that he transmit them to the people.

The lesson for us here is that we must always relate to people in their best light, inviting and encouraging them to learn the Torah and fulfill its commandments even if they do not seem presently worthy to do so.<sup>71</sup> **He gave him the two Tablets:** The sages tell us<sup>72</sup> that the use of the verb "to give" here indicates that God gave the Torah to the Jewish people as a gift. This means that through our study and observance of the Torah we are able to elicit revelations of Divine beneficence and consciousness far beyond what we could naturally elicit through our own spiritual merits. The patriarchs and matriarchs could only elicit Divine revelations according to their self-nullification, but even though our efforts might seem meager in comparison to theirs, God rewards us far beyond what we actually "earn."<sup>73</sup>

68. Likutei Torah 2:44c; Or HaTorah, Shemot, pp. 1954-1955. 69. As in Genesis 37:11. 70. Ma'amarei Admor HaZaken, Parashiot, pp. 375-377. 71. Likutei Sichot, vol. 11, pp. 179-180. 72. Shemot Rabbah 41:2. 73. Or HaTorah, Shemot, pp. 1901 ff; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5627, pp. 160 ff; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5679, pp. 256 ff; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5722, pp. 152 ff.



**16 The Israelites shall observe the Sabbath, establishing the Sabbath throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant.**

**17 It is a sign between Me and the Israelites for all time, that in six days God made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested.** Certainly I did not rest because I was tired or had nothing else to do, but rather because there was a positive purpose in resting.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, you should rest on the Sabbath for the same reason.<sup>56</sup>

## The Tablets

- ◆ *Second Reading* **18** Having concluded its description of both the contractual and covenantal sides of the relationship between God and the people that was established at the Giving of the Torah,<sup>56</sup> the Torah now resumes the historical narrative from the end of Moses' first 40 days on Mount Sinai, that is, from the end of *parashat Mishpatim*.<sup>57</sup> **When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai,** teaching him the outline of all the Torah's laws and the details of the laws found in *parashat Mishpatim*.<sup>58</sup> **He gave him the two Tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.** The two tablets were square—six handbreadths long and six handbreadths wide—and three handbreadths thick.<sup>59</sup> The first five commandments were engraved on the first tablet, and the second five on the second tablet. Miraculously, even though the two tablets were exactly the same size<sup>60</sup> and there were many more words on the first tablet, the size of the letters, the spacing between them, the spacing between the lines, and margins were the same on both.<sup>61</sup>

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### ✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

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**16 The Israelites shall observe the Sabbath:** An alternative meaning of the word for "observe" in this verse is "protect." It will be explained later<sup>62</sup> that refraining from work on the Sabbath enables us to attune ourselves to God's "resting" mentality and thereby ascend to a higher order of living. In the idiom of our sages, every Jew is granted an "extra soul" on the Sabbath.<sup>63</sup> However, being exceptionally gifted entails exceptional responsibility. Our heightened spiritual level on the Sabbath renders any offense to this spirituality more serious than it would be during the week. Therefore, on the Sabbath we must be more conscientious in our observance of the commandments; we must "protect" our heightened Sabbath consciousness.<sup>64</sup>

**The Israelites shall observe the Sabbath, establishing the Sabbath:** Again, an alternative meaning of the word for "observe" in this verse is "protect." In addition, an alternate meaning of the word for "establishing" is "making." Thus, this phraseology implies that there are two dimensions of the Sabbath: one that we are intended to "protect" and another that we are intended to "make."

The Sabbath is intrinsically holy, inasmuch as God

sanctified it when He created the world.<sup>65</sup> Our task with respect to this intrinsic holiness is simply to "protect" it, that is, be careful not to counteract or sabotage it. This we do by not performing forbidden types of work, and, more subtly, according our demeanor to the holy character of the day.

Beyond this, however, we can also infuse additional holiness into the Sabbath, over and above its own, intrinsic holiness. We do this by pursuing holiness, either through Torah study, prayer, or acts of kindness. In this way, we also "make" the Sabbath and our experience of it holier than it is intrinsically.<sup>66</sup> In particular, we draw additional spirituality and Divine consciousness into our experience of the Sabbath by pursuing holiness during the preceding week. Just as our physical enjoyment of the Sabbath depends on how well we prepare everything we need beforehand—as the sages say, "He who toils on the day before the Sabbath will eat on the Sabbath"<sup>67</sup>—so does our spiritual experience of the Sabbath's holiness depend on how well we prepare spiritually beforehand. During the workweek, our challenge is to infuse holiness into our mundane pursuits and interests.

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55. See on Genesis 2:2. 56. See on 19:6, above. 57. Above, 24:18. 58. See above, on 21:1. 59. *Bava Batra* 14a; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 21, p. 484; *Sichot Kodesh* 5741, vol. 2, pp. 513-515; *Hitva'aduyot* 5742, vol. 1., pp. 274-276. 60. Rashi on Deuteronomy 9:11. 61. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 29, pp. 55-57. 62. On 35:1. 63. *Beitzah* 16a; *Ta'anit* 27b. 64. *Or HaTorah, Shemot*, pp. 1960-1961. 65. Genesis 2:3. 66. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5700, p. 81 ff. 67. *Avodah Zarah* 3a.

— ONKELOS —

32:1 וְהָיָה עִמָּא אַרְי אֹחֵר מִשָּׁה לְמַחַת מִן טוֹרָא וְאַתְפְּנִישׁ עִמָּא עַל אַהֲרֹן וְאַמְרוּ לֵהּ קוּם עֲבִיד לְנָא דְחֵלֵן דִּי יִהְיוּן קְדָמְנָא אַרְי דִּין מִשָּׁה גְבָרָא דִּי אֶסְקְנָא מֵאַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם לֹא יִדְעָנָא מַה הָיָה לֵהּ: 2 וְאַמְר לְהוֹן אַהֲרֹן פְּרִיקוּ קְדָשִׁי דְדִהֲבָא דִּי בְּאֲדָנִי וְשִׁיבוּן בְּנִיבוּן וּבְנִיתִיכוּן וְאִיתוּ לִי: 3 וְאַתְפְּרִיקוּ כָּל-עִמָּא יַת קְדָשִׁי דְדִהֲבָא דִּי בְּאֲדָנִי הוֹן וְאִיתִיאוּ לֹת אַהֲרֹן: 4 וְנִסִּיב מִיִּדְהוֹן וְצַר יִתְהַ בְּזִיפָא וְעֲבָדָה עַגְל מִתְכָּא וְאַמְרוּ אֲלֵינוּ דְחֵלְתָּהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל דִּי אֶסְקוּף מֵאַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם:

32:1 וַיֵּרָא הָעָם כִּי-בִשַׁשׁ מִשָּׁה לָרַדְתָּ מִן-הַהָר וַיִּקְהַל הָעָם עַל-אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּם | עֲשֵׂה-לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יִלְכוּ לִפְנֵינוּ כִּי-זֶה | מִשָּׁה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֹא יָדַעְנוּ מַה-הָיָה לוֹ: 2 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אַהֲרֹן פְּרִקוּ נְזָמֵי הַזֹּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵי נְשִׁיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם וּבְנֵיתֵיכֶם וְהִבִּיאוּ אֵלָי: 3 וַיִּתְפָּרְקוּ כָּל-הָעָם אֶת-נְזָמֵי הַזֹּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל-אַהֲרֹן: 4 וַיִּקַּח מֵיָדָם וַיַּצַּר אֹתוֹ בַּחֶרֶט וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ עַגְל מַסֵּכָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָהּ אֱלֹהֵיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלוּךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

— RASHI —

נִמְצְאוּ הֵם מְפֹרָקִים מִנְזָמֵיהֶם. דִּישְׁקִייר בְּלַעֲזוּ: **אֶת-נְזָמֵי**. כְּמוֹ "מִנְזָמִי", כְּמוֹ: "כִּצְאֵתִי אֶת-הָעִיר"<sup>54</sup> — מִן-הָעִיר: 4 **וַיַּצַּר אֹתוֹ בַּחֶרֶט**. יֵשׁ לְתַרְגְּמוֹ בְּשָׁנֵי פָּנִים: הָאֶחָד, "וַיַּצַּר" — לְשׁוֹן קְשִׁירָה. "בַּחֶרֶט" — לְשׁוֹן סוּדָר, כְּמוֹ: "וְהִמְטָפְחוֹת וְהִחְרִיטִים"<sup>55</sup>, "וַיַּצַּר כְּכָרִים כֶּסֶף בְּשָׁנֵי חֲרִטִים"<sup>56</sup>. וְהַשְּׁנִי, "וַיַּצַּר" — לְשׁוֹן צוּרָה. "בַּחֶרֶט" — כְּלֵי אֲמָנוֹת הַצּוּרְפִין, שְׁחוֹרְצִין וְחוֹרְטִין בּוֹ צוּרוֹת בְּזָהָב, כְּעַט סוֹפֵר הַחוֹרֵט אוֹתִיּוֹת בְּלוֹחוֹת וּפְנֻקְסִין. כְּמוֹ: "וּכְתַב עֲלָיו בַּחֶרֶט אֲנֹשׁ"<sup>57</sup>. וְהוּא שְׁתַּרְגָּם אֲנָקְלוֹס: "וַיַּצַּר יְתִיָה בְּזִיפָא" — לְשׁוֹן זִיפָה, הוּא כְּלֵי אֲמָנוֹת שְׁחוֹרְצִין בּוֹ בְּזָהָב אוֹתִיּוֹת וּשְׁקָדִים, שְׁקוֹרִין בְּלַעֲזוּ נִי"ל<sup>58</sup> וּמְזוּפִין עַל יָדוֹ חוֹתְמוֹת: **עַגְל מַסֵּכָה**. כִּיּוֹן שֶׁהַשְּׁלִיכוֹ לְאוּר בְּכוֹר, בָּאוּ מְכַשְׁפֵי עַרְב רַב שֶׁעֲלּוּ עִמָּהֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם, וַעֲשֹׂאוּהוּ בְּכַשְׁפִּים. וַיֵּשׁ אוֹמְרִים: מִיכָּה הָיָה שָׁם, שִׁצְצָא מִתּוֹךְ דְּמוּסֵי בְנֵיךְ שְׁנַתְמַעֲרָ בּוֹ בְּמִצְרַיִם, וְהָיָה בִּידוֹ שֶׁם וְטַס שְׁכַתְבּוֹ בּוֹ מִשָּׁה "עֲלָה שׁוֹר!" "עֲלָה שׁוֹר!" לְהַעֲלוֹת אֲרוֹנוֹ שֶׁל יוֹסֵף מִתּוֹךְ נִילוֹס, וְהַשְּׁלִיכוֹ לְתוֹךְ הַכּוֹר, וַיַּצַּא הָעַגְל: **מַסֵּכָה**. לְשׁוֹן מִתְכָּא. דְּבַר אַחֵר: ק"ח קִנְטְרִין זָהָב הָיוּ בּוֹ, כְּגַמְטְרִיא שֶׁל "מַסֵּכָה": **אֵלָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ**. וְלֹא נֶאֱמַר "אֵלָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ". מִכָּאן, שֶׁעַרְב רַב שֶׁעֲלּוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם הֵם שֶׁנִּקְהָלוּ עַל אַהֲרֹן, וְהֵם שֶׁעֲשֹׂאוּהוּ וְאַחֵר כֶּף הַטָּעוֹ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲחֵרָיו:

1 **כִּי-בִשַׁשׁ מִשָּׁה**. כְּתַרְגוּמוֹ, לְשׁוֹן אִיחּוּר. וְכֵן "בִּשַׁשׁ רָבְבוּ"<sup>59</sup>, "וַיִּזְחִילוּ עַד-בוֹשׁ"<sup>60</sup>. כִּי כְּשֶׁעָלָה מִשָּׁה לְהָר אָמַר לָהֶם: לְסוֹף אֲרַבְעִים יוֹם אָנִי בָּא בְּתוֹךְ שֵׁשׁ שָׁעוֹת. כְּסוּבּוּרִים הֵם שְׂאוֹתוֹ יוֹם שֶׁעָלָה, מִן הַמִּנּוּן הוּא. וְהוּא אָמַר לָהֶם "שְׁלֵמִים" — אֲרַבְעִים יוֹם וְלִילוֹ עִמּוֹ, וַיּוֹם עֲלִיתוֹ אִין לִילוֹ עִמּוֹ, שֶׁהָרִי בּוֹ בְּסִיּוֹן עָלָה, נִמְצָא יוֹם אֲרַבְעִים בִּי"ו בְּתַמּוּוֹ. בְּט"וֹ בָּא הַשְּׁטָן וְעָרַבְבַּ אֶת הָעוֹלָם, וְהִרְאָה דְמוּת חֹשֶׁךְ וְאַפְלָה וְעָרְבוּבָיָא, לֹמַר: וְדַאי מִת מִשָּׁה, לְכַף בָּא עָרְבוּבָיָא לְעוֹלָם. אָמַר לָהֶם: מִת מִשָּׁה, שֶׁכָּבַר בָּאוּ שֵׁשׁ שָׁעוֹת וְלֹא בָּא וְכו'. כִּדְאִיתָּא בְּמַסֵּכַת שִׁבְתָּי<sup>61</sup>. וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר לֹמַר שֶׁלֹּא טָעוּ אֵלָּא בִּיּוֹם הַמְעַנֵּן בֵּין קֶדֶם חֲצוֹת בֵּין לְאַחַר חֲצוֹת. שֶׁהָרִי לֹא יָרַד מִשָּׁה עַד יוֹם הַמִּחְרָת, שְׁנֶאֱמַר: "וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ מִמִּחְרַת וַיַּעֲלוּ עֲלֹת"<sup>62</sup>: **אֲשֶׁר יִלְכוּ לִפְנֵינוּ**. אֱלֹהוֹת הָרְבִיבָה אוּו לָהֶם: **כִּי זֶה מִשָּׁה הָאִישׁ**. כְּמִין דְמוּת מִשָּׁה הִרְאָה לָהֶם הַשְּׁטָן, שְׁנוּשָׂאִים אוֹתוֹ בְּאוּר רְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם: **אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם**. וְהָיָה מוֹרָה לָנוּ דֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר נִעְלָה בָּהּ, עֲתָה צְרִיכִין אָנוּ לְאֱלֹהוֹת אֲשֶׁר יִלְכוּ לִפְנֵינוּ: 2 **בְּאָזְנֵי נְשִׁיכֶם**. אָמַר אַהֲרֹן בְּלָבוֹ: הַנְּשִׁים וְהַיְלָדִים חֲסִים עַל תְּכִשְׁטִיתָהּ, שְׁמָא יִתְעַכֵּב הַדְּבָר וּבְתוֹךְ כֶּף יָבֵא מִשָּׁה. וְהֵם לֹא הִמְתִּינוּ, וּפְרָקוּ מֵעַל עֲצָמָן: **פְּרָקוּ**. לְשׁוֹן צוּרִי, מְגוֹרֵת "פְּרָק" לְיַחֲדָה, כְּמוֹ: "בְּרָכוֹ" מְגוֹרֵת "בְּרָךְ": 3 **וַיִּתְפָּרְקוּ**. לְשׁוֹן פְּרִיקַת מִשָּׂא, כְּשֶׁנִּטְלוּ מֵאֲזִנֵּיהֶם

53. לְפָרֶק, לְהַסִּיר. 54. שְׁמוֹת ט, כט. 55. יִשְׁעִיָה ג, כב. 56. מַלְכִּי־ב ה, כג. 57. יִשְׁעִיָה ח, א. 58. תְּצַרִּיב שְׁחוֹר.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

4 **A molten calf:** As mentioned above,<sup>82</sup> Pharaoh did not believe that God the Creator manifested His

power on earth; he believed that God abandoned the world to the immutable forces of nature. The purpose

74. Arachin 15ab. 75. See on Genesis 46:6; above, 1:15, 12:38, 25:5; Rashi on 26:15, above. 76. Above, 25:22. 77. Above, 20:20. 78. Likutei Sichot, vol. 11, p. 144-145. 79. Likutei Sichot, vol. 11, p. 152, note 79. 80. Above, on 12:36. 81. Below, v. 26. 82. On 5:2.



## The Golden Calf

32:1 But meanwhile, **the people** had miscalculated the 40 days. They counted the day Moses ascended the mountain as the first day, even though it was not a complete day, while Moses meant 40 *full* days. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz, which they thought was the fortieth day, they **saw that Moses had delayed in coming down from the mountain**. Furthermore, the accusing angel, Satan, made the weather unnaturally overcast and gloomy. The people feared that this unnatural gloom meant that Moses had died. Satan spoke to them and said, “Yes, he has died.” At first they did not believe him, but he then showed them an image of Moses being carried to heaven on his deathbed. Seeing this, they believed him. Realizing the necessity for a leader or leadership body who can transmit God’s intentions to them, **the people gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Arise, make us substitute leaders, who will channel God’s messages to us and thereby lead us, because this man Moses, who led us up out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him.”** This was the eighth time the people challenged God’s ability to come to their aid.<sup>74</sup> The people knew that God was going to command them to build a Tabernacle,<sup>75</sup> the central feature of which would be the Ark, and that He planned to communicate with Moses through the gold cherubim on the Ark’s Cover.<sup>76</sup> They imagined that if Aaron—the holiest person available to them in Moses’ absence—were to make a similar, properly constructed gold figure, this would express their desire for Divine guidance, and God would indeed consent to communicate with them this way. Even though God had already told Moses that it is forbidden to make likenesses of the cherubim,<sup>77</sup> the people had not yet heard this command from Moses (since he had not yet descended from Mount Sinai).<sup>78</sup>

2 Nonetheless, **Aaron** sensed that it was not a good idea to do this, so he **said to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”** He hoped that the women and children, who value their jewelry, would not consent—at least not immediately—and this would delay matters until Moses returned.

3 But instead of asking their wives and children for their jewelry, **all of the male people immediately stripped themselves of the gold rings that were on their own ears and brought them to Aaron**. Thus, the women played no part in this affair.<sup>79</sup>

4 Aaron **took the gold from their hands, bound it in a cloth and cast it into the fire**. Then, either the magicians among the mixed multitude came and magically **made the melting gold into a molten calf** or Micah threw the plate on which Moses had written a Divine Name and the words “Ascend, ox; ascend, ox”<sup>80</sup> into the fire, and this transformed the melting gold into a molten calf. From another perspective, Aaron himself **formed the gold into a calf, using a molding tool**. In either case, when the calf was finished, it magically came alive. Seeing this, the mixed multitude **said, “This, Israel, is your god, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”** Instead of relating to the calf as a substitute for Moses, they treated it as a replacement for God Himself, and thus made it into an idol. Some of the Israelites were swept up in the fervor of the moment and committed this sin, as well. Miriam’s son, Hur, started to point out to them that this was wrong, but the idolaters killed him. No one from the tribe of Levi participated in the idolatry.<sup>81</sup>

— ONKELOS —

5 וַחַזָּא אֱהָרֹן וּבְנָא מִדְּבָרָא קְדָמוּהֵי וַקְרָא אֱהָרֹן וְאָמַר חַגָּא קְדָם יְיָ מָחָר: 6 וְאֶקְדִּימוּ בְיוֹמָא דְּבִתְרוּהֵי וְאֶסִּיקוּ עֲלוֹן וְקָרִיבוּ נְבִסִּין וְאֶסְחָר עִמָּא לְמִיכַל וְלְמִשְׁתֵּי וְקָמוּ לְחִיבָא: 7 וּמְלִיל יְיָ עִם מֹשֶׁה אֵיזִיל חוּת אָרִי חַבְלִיו עִמּוֹךְ דִּי אֶסִּיקְתָּא מֵאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם: 8 סָטוּ בְּפָרִיעַ מִן אֲרָחָא דִּי פְקִידָתוֹן עֲבָדוּ לְחוּן עֲגָל מִתְּבָא וְסִגִּידוּ לָהּ וּדְבָחוּ לָהּ וְאָמְרוּ אֵלֵין דְּחַלְתָּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל דִּי אֶסְקוּךָ מֵאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם:

5 וַיֵּרָא אֱהָרֹן וַיְבִן מִזְבֵּחַ לְפָנָיו וַיִּקְרָא אֱהָרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר חַג לַיהוָה מָחָר: 6 וַיִּשְׁבְּימוּ מִמִּבְחָרֹת וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּנְשׂוּ שְׁלָמִים וַיֵּשֶׁב הָעָם לֶאֱכֹל וּשְׂתוּ וַיִּקְמוּ לְצַחֵק: פ  
7 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵּדַבֵּר בִּי שַׁחַת עִמּוֹךְ אֲשֶׁר הַעֲלִיתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: 8 סָרוּ מִיַּחַד מִן־הַדָּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָם עֲשׂוּ לָהֶם עֲגָל מִסֶּבֶה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ־לָהּ וַיִּזְבְּחוּ־לָהּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּהָ אֱלֹהֵיהָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלֹךְ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

— RASHI —

בטוח היה שביבא משה ויעבדו את המקום: 6 וישביומו. השטן ורום כדי שיחטאו: לצחק. יש במשמע הזה גלוי עריות, כמו שנאמר: "לצחק ביי". ושפיכות דמים, כמו שנאמר: "יקומו נא הנערים וישקו לפנינו", אף כאן נהרג חור: 7 וידבר. לשון קשי הוא, כמו: "וידבר אתם קשות"<sup>55</sup>: לך־רד. מגדלתך, לא נתתי לך גדלה אלא בשבילם. באותה שעה נתנדה משה מפי בית־דין של מעלה: שחת עמוך. "שחת העם" לא נאמר, אלא "עמוך" — ערב רב שקבלת מעמך וגירתם ולא נמלכת בי, ואמרת: טוב שידבקו גרים בשכינה. הם שחתו והשחיתו:

5 וַיֵּרָא אֱהָרֹן. שְׁהִיָּה בּוֹ רוּחַ חַיִּים, שְׁנֵאָמַר: "בְּתַבְּנִית שׁוֹר אֲכַל עֶשֶׂב"<sup>59</sup>. וְרָאָה שֶׁהַצֵּלִיחַ מֵעֶשֶׂה שֶׁטָּן, וְלֹא הָיָה לוֹ פֶּה לְדַחוּתָם לְגַמְרֵי: וַיְבִן מִזְבֵּחַ. לְדַחוּתָם: וַיֹּאמֶר חַג לָהּ מָחָר. וְלֹא הַיּוֹם, שְׁמָא יָבֵא מֹשֶׁה קְדָם שְׁיַעֲבֹדוּהוּ. וְהוּ פְּשׁוּטוֹ. וּמִדְּרָשׁוֹ בְּוִיקְרָא רַבְּהֵי: דְּבָרִים הַרְבֵּה רָאָה אֱהָרֹן — רָאָה חוּר בֶּן אַחוּתוֹ שֶׁהָיָה מוֹכִיחֵם וְהִרְגוּהוּ, וְזֶהוּ "וַיְבִן מִזְבֵּחַ לְפָנָיו" — וַיְבִן מִזְבֵּחַ לְפָנָיו. וְעוֹד רָאָה וְאָמַר: מוּטָב שִׁיתְּלֶהּ בִּי הַסֶּרְחוֹן וְלֹא בָהֶם. וְעוֹד רָאָה וְאָמַר: אִם הֵם בּוֹנִים אֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, זֶה מְבִיא צָרוֹר וְזֶה מְבִיא אָבָן, וְנִמְצְאָת מְלֹאכְתָּן נַעֲשִׂית בְּבַת אַחַת, מִתּוֹךְ שְׂאֵנֵי בּוֹנֶה אוֹתוֹ וּמִתְעַצֵּל בְּמִלְאכְתֵּי, בֵּין כֶּף וּבֵין כֶּף מֹשֶׁה בָּא: חַג לָהּ. בְּלִבּוֹ הָיָה לְשָׁמַיִם,

59. תהלים קו, כ. 60. י. ג. 61. בראשית לט, יז. 62. שמואלב ב, ד. 63. בראשית מב, ז.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

rienced His revelation at Mount Sinai, and had been restored to the sublime spiritual status of Adam and Eve before the primordial sin, could commit such a blatant transgression so soon afterward?

True, a close reading of the narrative reveals that it was a gradual series of well-intentioned mistakes exploited by the mixed multitude that led them to build the calf, and that only a small percentage of the people actually participated. Still, the magnitude of the sin seems totally disproportionate to the spiritual heights the people had so recently attained.

The sages therefore assert<sup>85</sup> that the entire incident was "forced" upon the people by God; much as He maneuvered Adam and Eve into the sin of eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, so did He maneuver the people here into the sin of the Golden Calf. The purpose in each case was to provide an example of repentance for wrongdoers to follow, or, in a larger

sense, to enable humanity to rise to the heights of spiritual achievement only attainable through repentance.

Repentance is not a path in life that we can choose on our own, since no one is allowed to sin intentionally. It is possible to repent only after we suffer an inadvertent lapse in Divine consciousness, allowing us to be duped into wrongdoing. Therefore, since the people at this time were beyond any wrongdoing, God had to give the evil inclination temporary sway over them so they could subsequently repent.<sup>86</sup>

7 **Go down from your present spiritual level:** Moses not only did not participate in the people's sin, he could not even be faulted for not protesting their actions, since he was not there. Nonetheless, he was adversely affected by their sin. Such is the nature of the bond between a true Jewish leader and his people—when they fall, he falls too.<sup>87</sup>

85. Avodah Zarah 4b-5a. 86. Likutei Sichot, vol. 16, pp. 412-413. 87. Likutei Sichot, vol. 21, p. 175.

5 **Aaron saw** that the calf had come alive and that it would be difficult to convince the idolaters that it did not have supernatural powers. He also saw that the idolaters had killed his nephew Hur, and understood that he could not dissuade them; his best chances were to delay any actual worship so Moses could arrive in the meantime. Finally, he understood that it would be better for him to assume responsibility for the sin rather than let the responsibility rest with the sinners themselves. **So, for all these reasons, he insisted they let him build the calf an altar by himself, instead of them building it together.** This way, he could tarry constructing it as long as possible and the onus would be mainly on him. They assented, and **he slowly built an altar before it. Aaron announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to God!"** He hoped that Moses would arrive imminently and lead them the next day in worshipping God, using this altar.

Thus, the actual idolatry was postponed until the next day.

6 Knowing that Moses would descend the mountain before noon, Satan woke the people up early. **They rose early the next day, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz, and sacrificed ascent-offerings and brought peace-offerings** to the calf. **The people then sat down to eat and drink, and then got up to revel.** They conducted a carnal orgy, indulging in forbidden relations, and this led to murder, as well.

7 **God then spoke to Moses: "Go down the mountain, and descend as well from your present spiritual level, for the mixed multitude, your people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt without consulting Me,<sup>83</sup> have become corrupt** and corrupted some of the Israelites. I elevated you to your present spiritual level only for the sake of the people; now that they have become corrupt, your spiritual status must drop as well.

8 **They have been quick to turn away from the path that I commanded them to follow; they have made themselves a molten calf. They have prostrated themselves before it and have offered sacrifices to it, saying, "This, Israel, is your god, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt."** They credited *it* with all the miracles *I* did for them!"

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❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

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of the plagues was to demonstrate that God can and does manifest Himself in the world, and thus to prove that He is the sole power we should obey.

When Moses did not descend the mountain at the anticipated time, the mixed multitude speculated that there was perhaps another explanation for the plagues. Perhaps, they reasoned, it was not that God overcame nature, but that one force of nature overcame another. Specifically, the Egyptians wor-

shipped the zodiacal sign Aries, the ram. The next sign of the zodiac is Taurus, the bull. Perhaps Taurus overcame Aries?

This theory was so convincing that some of the Israelites accepted it; this is why the idol the people made was a calf.<sup>84</sup>

6 **They sacrificed ascent-offerings and brought peace-offerings:** How is it that the people who witnessed God's miracles in Egypt and at the Sea of Reeds, expe-

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83. Above, 12:38. 84. *Or HaTorah, Shemot*, pp. 1985-1986. In Psalms 106:20, the idol is specifically referred to as a "bull."

— ONKELOS —

9 ואמר יי למשה גלי קדמי  
 עמא הדין והא עם קשי  
 קדל הוא: 10 וכען אנח בעותך מן  
 קדמי ויתקף רגזי בהון ואשיצנן  
 ואעבד יתך לעם סגי: 11 וצלי  
 משה קדם יי אלהה ואמר למא  
 יי יתקף רגוזך בעמך די אפיקתא  
 מארעא דמצרים בחיל רב ובידיא  
 תקפא: 12 למא יימרון מצראי  
 למימר בבישא אפיקנן לקטלא  
 יתהון ביני טריא ולשיציותהון  
 מעל אפי ארעא תוב מתקוף  
 רגוזך ותוב מן בישתא דחשיבתא  
 לקעבד לעמך: 13 אדבר  
 לאברהם ליצחק ולישראל  
 עבדיך די קיימתא להון במימך  
 ומלילתא עמהון אסגי ית בניכון  
 בכוכבי שמיא וכל־ארעא הדיא  
 די אמרית אמן לבניכון ויחסנן  
 לעלם:

9 ויאמר יהוה אל־משה ראיתי את־העם הזה והנה  
 עם־קשה־עֶרְף הוא: 10 ועתה הניחה לי ויחר־אפי בהם  
 ואכלם ואעשה אותך לגוי גדול: 11 ויחל משה את־  
 פני יהוה אלהיו ויאמר למה יהוה יחרה אפך בעמך  
 אשר הוצאת מארץ מצרים בכח גדול וביד חזקה:  
 12 למה יאמרו מצרים לאמר ברעה הוציאם  
 להרג אתם בהרים ולכלתם מעל פני האדמה  
 שוב מחרון אפך והנחם על־הרעה לעמך:  
 13 זכר לאברהם ליצחק ולישראל עבדיך אשר  
 נשבעת להם בך והתדבר אלהם ארבה את־זרעכם  
 בכוכבי השמים וכל־הארץ הזאת אשר אמרתי אתן  
 לזרעכם ונחלו לעלם:

— RASHI —

— זכר ליצחק שפשט צוארו לעקדה. אם לגלות  
 — זכר ליעקב שגלה לחרון. ואם אינן נצולין בכותן,  
 מה אתה אומר לי: "ואעשה אותך לגוי גדול"<sup>64</sup>, ואם  
 כסא של שלש רגלים אינו עומד לפניך בשעת בעסך,  
 קל וחמר לכסא של רגל אחת: **אשר נשבעת להם בך**.  
 לא נשבעת להם בדרך שהוא כלה, לא בשמים ולא  
 בארץ לא בהרים ולא בגבעות, אלא בך שאתה קים  
 ושבועתך קיימת לעולם, שנאמר: "כי נשבעתי נאם־  
 ה'"<sup>65</sup>. וליצחק נאמר: "ויקמתי את־השבעה אשר  
 נשבעתי לאברהם אביך"<sup>66</sup>. וליעקב נאמר: "אני אל  
 שדי פרה ורבה"<sup>67</sup>, נשבע לו ב"אל שדי":

9 קשה־עֶרְף. מחזירין קשי ערפם לנגד מוכיחיהם,  
 וממאנים לשמע: 10 הניחה לי. עדין לא שמענו  
 שהתפלל משה עליהם, והוא אומר: "הניחה לי?"  
 אלא כאן פתח לו פתח, והודיעו שהדבר תלוי בו,  
 שאם יתפלל עליהם לא יכלם: 11 למה ה' יחרה אפך.  
 כיום מתקנא אלא חכם בחכם גבור בגבור: 12 והנחם.  
 התעשת מחשבה אחרת להטיב להם: על־הרעה. אשר  
 חשבת להם: 13 זכר לאברהם. אם עברו על עשרת  
 הדברות. אברהם אביהם נתנסה בעשר נסיונות, ועדין  
 לא קבל שכרו, תנה לו ויצאו עשר בעשר: לאברהם  
 ליצחק ולישראל. אם לשרפה הם — זכר לאברהם  
 שמסר עצמו להשרף עליה באור כשדים. אם להריגה

64. לעיל פסוק י. 65. בראשית כב, טו. 66. בראשית כ, ג. 67. בראשית לה, יא.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

**11 They have only been overcome temporarily by the folly of the moment:** Moses articulated here a fundamental truth regarding every Jew's intrinsic connection with God, inherited from the patriarchs and sealed at the Giving of the Torah. By virtue of our Divine soul, we are all inherently and irrevocably bound to God, and are incapable of severing or denying—or even *wanting* to sever or deny—that bond.<sup>96</sup> A Jew can

contravene God's will in even the slightest way only when this intrinsic bond recedes into his subconscious mind and his conscious mind is overtaken by the temporary illusion that ignoring or denying this bond is somehow advantageous.<sup>97</sup>

But even then, deep down, the Jew remains faithful to his intrinsic bond with God.<sup>98</sup> He knows that the illusion is a ruse and refuses to be duped.<sup>99</sup>

96. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5710, p. 114-116; *HaYom Yom*, 25 *Tamuz* (from *Igrot Kodesh Admor Mehorayatz*, vol. 4, p. 383). 97. *Sotah* 3a. 98. *Tanya*, chapter 24. 99. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 15, p. 407.

9 **GOD** further said to Moses, “I have observed this people, and it is indeed a **stiff-necked people**—they do not accept rebuke easily, if at all.

10 Therefore, **now**, I have only one option: **Let Me be; I will display indignation against them.** My indignation is so great that **I will destroy them entirely**, even those who are not guilty of idolatry. **I will** start over and **make you** and your descendents **into a great nation** in their stead.” Moses had not yet attempted to argue with God, but God intimated to him that if he would pray on the people’s behalf (and not “let Him be”), he could change His mind.

11 **So Moses then pleaded with GOD, his God, and said, “O GOD,** I understand that those who committed idolatry deserve the death penalty, but **why should You display** such impetuous **indignation against Your people**, forcing you to execute the guilty without trial and wipe out the innocent, as well? Why are You so jealous of a powerless, molten calf?<sup>88</sup> The people know full well that **You brought** them **out of the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand**, not this calf! They have only been temporarily overcome by the folly of the moment.

12 Furthermore, **why should the Egyptians** be allowed to say: ‘**He took them out of our country with evil intent: to kill them in the mountains and to utterly destroy them from the face of the earth**’? And **why should the Egyptians** be allowed to say: ‘**He took them out of our country when the evil star Ra’ah** was ascendant, so it is no surprise that they have come to this end’? Why give them continued cause to believe in their astrologers?<sup>89</sup> **Withdraw from Your display of indignation, and renounce the thought of bringing evil upon Your people.** Finally, they are technically innocent: when You gave them the commandment not to serve idols, You phrased it in the singular, as if referring to me alone.<sup>90</sup>

13 As for your idea of making my descendants into a new nation, **remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom You swore by Your Self**<sup>91</sup>—who is eternal—and told them, ‘**I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky, and all this land which I promised I will give to your descendants, and they will inherit it forever.**’ If You wish to execute them for transgressing the Ten Commandments, let the merit of Abraham—who has not yet received his reward for passing his ten tests<sup>92</sup>—counterbalance their demerits. If You wish to execute them by burning, let the merit of Abraham—who submitted himself to fire for Your sake<sup>93</sup>—counterbalance this. If You wish to execute them by the sword, let the merit of Isaac—who offered his neck to his father’s knife<sup>94</sup>—counterbalance this. If You wish to punish them by sending them into exile, let the merit of Jacob—who fled to Charan in order to secure the continuation of the patriarchal line<sup>95</sup>—counterbalance this. But if the combined merit of *three* patriarchs cannot redeem the people, why should I think that if you wipe them out and make a new nation out of my descendants that *my* merit alone will be able to redeem them at some future time?”

88. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 16, pp. 402-406. 89. 10:10, above; Rashi *ad loc.* 90. Rashi on 20:2, above. 91. See Genesis 22:16-17, 26:3-4, 35:11. 92. See on Genesis 22:1. 93. See on Genesis 11:28. 94. See on Genesis 22:8. 95. See on Genesis 28:1 ff.



— ONKELOS —  
 14 ותב יי מן בישתא די מליל למעבד לעמה: 15 ואתפני ונחת משה מן טורא ותרין לוחי סהדותא בידה לוחין פתיבין מתרין עבריהון מכא ומכא אנון פתיבין: 16 ולוחיא עובדא דיי אנון וכתבא כתבא דיי הוא מפרש על לוחיא: 17 ושמע יהושע נת קל עמא פד מיבבין ואמר למשה קל קרבא במשיריתא: 18 ואמר לא קל גברין דנצחין בקרבא ואף לא קל חלשין דמתברין קל דמוכין אנא שמע:

14 וינחם יהוה על־הרעה אשר דבר לעשות לעמו: פ  
 15 ויפן ויירד משה מן־ההר ושני לחת העדת בידו  
 לחת כתבים משני עבריהם מזה ומזה הם כתבים:  
 16 והלחת מעשה אלהים המה והמכתב מכתב  
 אלהים הוא חרות על־הלחת: 17 וישמע יהושע את־  
 קול העם ברעה ויאמר אל־משה קול מלחמה במחנה:  
 18 ויאמר אין קול ענות גבורה ואין קול ענות חלושה  
 קול ענות אנכי שמע:

— RASHI —

17 ברעה. בהרעו, שהיו מריעים ושומחים וצוחקים:  
 18 אין קול ענות גבורה. אין קול הזה נראה קול ענית  
 גבורים הצועקים נצחון, ולא קול חלשים שצועקים ווי  
 או ניסה: קול ענות. קול חרופין וגדופין, המענין את  
 נפש שומען בשנאמרין לו:

15 משני עבריהם. היו האותיות נקראות. ומעשה נסים  
 היה: 16 מעשה אלהים המה. במשמעו, הוא בכבודו  
 עשאן. דבר אחר: באדם האומר לחברו: כל־עסקיו  
 של פלוני במלאכה פלונית. כך כל־שעשועיו של  
 הקדוש ברוך־הוא בתורה: חרות. לשון "חרת" ו"חרט"  
 אחד הוא, שניהם לשון חקוק, אנטיילייר בלעז:

68. לחתך, לפסל.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

sage, and the recipient of the message all merge to become one.

With this approach to the Torah, we can never completely lose touch with it. The sands of time may cover the engraving, or the temptations of the world may make it hard to decipher; yet, throughout it all, that connection is there, and cannot possibly be revoked. This is the message that God imparted by carving the commandments in stone: "The Torah, you, and I are all one, and this unity can never be severed."<sup>102</sup>

Our sages point out that the word for "engraved" (*charut*) is related to the word for "free" (*cherut*). Based on this relation, they teach us that there is no true freedom other than Torah study.<sup>103</sup> But, given the great number of prescriptions and proscriptions in the Torah, the Torah and its lifestyle would seem to be more restrictive than liberating.

In truth, a great battles are waging within each of us: between our conflicting emotions, between matter and spirit, between the animal and the Godly. Each of these influences pulls in its own direction, in constant competition to gain the upper hand. We can

be truly free only when one influence or the other is fully victorious.

But, in fact, this can only work in one direction. Our Divine spirit can never truly rest while being forced into mundane activities. It can at times be temporarily beaten down, or even give up for a while and declare a truce. But it will never fully accept the sovereignty of physical matter, since this would be totally against its nature. It merely bides its time, waiting for a chance to renew its attack.

Our animal nature, on the other hand, can be refined, and through its subjugation to the spirit it will eventually realize that this was its true desire all along. The forces of materialism are vitally important, but their true natural state is to be guided and governed by spirituality. When our animal nature recognizes this, it can make peace with its function, and all facets of our personality can congeal and work harmoniously toward a common goal.

Thus, the Torah's restrictions on our animal nature serve to liberate us, whereas repressing our desires for Godliness can only end in strife and discontent.<sup>104</sup>

102. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 37. 103. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 10:8; *Kallah Rabati* 8; *Avot d'Rabbi Natan* 2:3. 104. Based on *Igrot Kodesh*, vol. 11, pp. 19-20.

14 Because of Moses' entreaty, **God renounced the thought of the evil that He had said He would do to His people.** He agreed instead only to destroy the guilty, and, where possible, to ascertain their guilt by due process of law. **God** also **determined** how to prevent the Egyptians from bolstering their belief in their astrologers: He decreed that the blood omen foretold by the star *Ra'ah* would apply to the bleeding that would occur many years later, when Joshua circumcised the Jews as they were about to enter the Land of Israel.<sup>100</sup> (The Jews were exempt from circumcising their newborn boys while in the desert, because they never knew when G-d would require them to travel, and it is dangerous to take an infant on a trip immediately after his circumcision.)

### **Breaking the Tablets; Punishing the Wrongdoers**

15 **Moses then turned and went down from the mountain with the two Tablets of Testimony in his hand.** The tablets were inscribed on both sides; that is, the letters were hewn all the way from one side to the other. The middle of the *samech* and of the final *mem* were thus miraculously suspended in midair. Thus, the tablets were inscribed on one side and on the other.

16 **The tablets were God's handiwork and the script was God's script, engraved by God Himself on the tablets.**

17 Joshua had pitched his tent at the foot of the mountain<sup>101</sup> and had been waiting for Moses during the forty days since the Giving of the Torah. **Joshua heard the sound of the people jubilating, and** when Moses met him on his way down the mountain, **he said to Moses, "There is a sound of battle in the camp!"**

18 **He replied, "It is not the triumphant sound of the victor nor the weakly sound of the defeated. A painful sound—the sound of blasphemy and cursing—is what I hear."**

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#### ✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

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**16 Engraved upon the tablets:** The Written Torah is *written* on parchment, with ink. It thus comprises two separate components: the message (the words written in ink) and the medium (the parchment upon which it is written). In the case of the Oral Torah, too, there are two separate components: the words (the message) and the person who is studying them (the medium for their articulation). Although we may become emotionally and intellectually involved in our studies, they nevertheless remain a peripheral addition to our essence.

The Ten Commandments, however, were engraved on the tablets themselves. Rather than two separate enti-

ties, there was just the stone itself, and the commandments were engraved onto it.

When something is written, it can be erased or scraped off; when it is studied orally, it can be forgotten. In the case of engraving, however, there is no way of separating the writing from the stone. It can be covered up, filled in, or additional parts of the stone can be chipped away so that the writing becomes illegible, but it cannot be erased or removed. The medium has become one with the message.

This is how we must approach the Torah. When we study the Torah, we should be so lost in it that all that exists for us is the Torah itself; the medium, the mes-

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<sup>100</sup>. Rashi on 10:10, above. See Joshua 5:9. <sup>101</sup>. Above, 24:13.



— ONKELOS —

19 והיה כד קריב למשריתא וחווא ית עגלא והנגין ותקיף רגוא דמשה ורמא מידוהי ית לוחיא ותבר יתהון בשפולי טורא: 20 ונסיב ית עגלא די עבדו ואוקיד בנורא ושף עד די הנה דקיק וזרא על אפי מניא ואשקי ית בני ישראל:

19 ויהי כאשר קרב אל־המתנה וירא את־העגל ומחלת ויהר־אף מושה וישלך מידו {מדין} את־הלחת וישבר אתם תחת ההר: 20 ויקח את־העגל אשר עשו וישרף באש ויטחן עד אשר־דק ויזר על־פני המים וישק את־בני ישראל:

— RASHI —

לכדקם כסוטות. שלש מיתות נדונו שם: אם יש עדים והתראה — בסוף, כמשפט אנשי עיר הנדחת שהן מרבין. עדים בלא התראה — במגפה, שנאמר: "ויגף ה' את־העם"<sup>72</sup>. לא עדים ולא התראה — בהדרוקן, שבדקום המים וצבו בטניהם:

19 וישלף מידו וגו'. אמר: מה־פסח שהוא אחד מן המצות, אמרה תורה: "כל־בן־נכר לא־יכל בו"<sup>69</sup>. התורה בלה כאן וכל־ישראל משמדים, ואתננה להם! תחת ההר. לרגלי ההר: 20 ויזר. לשון נפוצ, וכן "יזרה על־גנהו גפרית"<sup>70</sup>, וכן "כי־חנם מורה הרשת"<sup>71</sup> — שזורין בה דגן וקטניות: וישק את־בני ישראל. נתבון

69. שמות יב, מג. 70. איוב יח, טו. 71. משלי א, יז. 72. שמות לב, לה.

3. Those of the mixed multitude who had been neither legally warned nor witnessed.

4. All those who had not been legally warned but had been witnessed in the act. There was no legal way of trying or executing the second two categories, so God planned on punishing them Himself. As will be recounted presently, Moses tried to convince God to forgive them.

Moses first administered the trial by ordeal to the born Israelites who had been neither legally warned nor witnessed. **He took the calf that they had made and burned it in fire**, melting it down to unformed gold again. When it cooled, he **ground it into fine powder and scattered it over the water** of the river descending the mountain,<sup>115</sup> mixing it into a solution, **and made the Israelites drink it**. The abdomens of those who were guilty swelled and exploded, killing them, just as occurs with the suspected adulteress who is found guilty.<sup>116</sup>

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

19 **He saw the calf and the dancing...he hurled the tablets:** On a deeper level, our sages say that the two tablets were actually too heavy for Moses to carry naturally, and were being supported by God's supernatural script. When the Jews sinned, the writing "departed." Moses' hands were weighed down, so he smashed the tablets involuntarily.<sup>117</sup>

Although God apprised Moses of the Jews' iniquity while he was still atop the mountain, he was too caught up in the spirituality of the experience to comprehend the betrayal of his flock. It was only when he descended to the camp and actually "saw the calf and the dancing" that the enormity of their sin hit home.

His anger blazed and he could no longer bear the weight of the tablets.

This insight helps us clarify a seeming redundancy in an earlier verse. God says to Moses: "Go and descend, for your people have become corrupt."<sup>118</sup> Rashi explains that the word "descend" implies that Moses should descend from his greatness, for it was given to him only in the merit of his people. Why the superfluous word "go"? God, in effect, told Moses: "At this point you cannot fully appreciate My anger. So, 'go' — go down to your people and actually see what it is that they have done; 'and descend' — at that point you will feel that you too have been dragged down."<sup>119</sup>

115. Deuteronomy 9:21. 116. Numbers 5:21, 24. 117. Y. Ta'anit 4:5. 118. v. 7, above. 119. Likutei Sichot, vol. 10, pp. 169-170.

19 Until now, Moses had been somewhat aloof from the gravity of the people's sin.<sup>105</sup> But **as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses became indignant.** He reasoned: "If serving idols disqualifies someone from offering the Passover sacrifice<sup>106</sup>—which is only a small part of the whole Torah—it should surely disqualify him from receiving the Torah in its entirety! And the entire Torah is alluded to in the Ten Commandments engraved on these tablets!"<sup>107</sup> He further reasoned:<sup>108</sup> "The people were 'wedded' to God at the Giving of the Torah, and the tablets are the 'wedding contract,' so to speak. This act of idolatry is thus analogous to a wife being unfaithful to her husband, and adultery is a capital offense.<sup>109</sup> In order to save their lives, I will destroy the wedding contract!"<sup>110</sup> So **he hurled the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.**

20 The people stopped their revelry, and Moses proceeded to try them for their idolatry. Continuing the analogy of idolatry to adultery, a court can only execute an adulteress when the act is preceded by a legal warning and witnessed. If the husband only *suspects* that his wife has been unfaithful but has no proof, he can, under certain circumstances, administer a form of trial by ordeal.<sup>111</sup>

Based on this analogy, God told Moses to try the people for their unfaithfulness. But this analogy could, at this point, only be applied to born Israelites. The status of the mixed multitude, who Moses had converted on his own initiative, was still pending. They did not yet have the status of full converts, so they were not fully "wedded" to God; they were analogous to semi-Jewish handmaidens.<sup>112</sup> This did not make a difference for those who had been both warned and witnessed committing idolatry, since idolatry is a capital crime for both Jews and non-Jews. God therefore told Moses to set up a court for those who had been both warned and witnessed committing idolatry—these individuals were to be executed by the sword by the court or its agents, as will be recounted presently. This, in effect, was an application of the law pertaining to a city that is collectively convicted of idolatry.<sup>113</sup> But only the born Israelites could be tried by the ordeal administered to a suspected adulteress, since only they were God's full-fledged "wives." Furthermore, this ordeal can be administered only if the wife is merely *suspect*; if she has been witnessed in the act, the ordeal cannot be applied.<sup>114</sup> Thus, a wife who has been witnessed committing adultery but not formally warned cannot be capitally tried (her husband's only legal recourse is to divorce her).

Thus, with regard to trial and punishment after the idolatry of the Golden Calf, there were four categories of people:

1. All those who had been legally warned and witnessed. These were tried by the court and executed.
2. The born Israelites who had been neither legally warned nor witnessed. These were subjected to the trial by ordeal.

105. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 10, pp. 169-170. 106. Above, 12:43. 107. See above, 20:1. 108. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 34, pp. 219-220. 109. Leviticus 20:11. 110. Rashi on 34:1, below, below; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 16, pp. 408-412. 111. Numbers 5:11-31. 112. See Leviticus 19:20. 113. Deuteronomy 13:13-18. A *single* idolator, however, is executed by stoning (Deuteronomy 17:2-5). 114. Numbers 5:13.

— ONKELOS —  
 21 ואמר משה לאהרן מה עשית לך העם הזה כיהבאת עליי חטאה גדלה: 22 ואמר אהרן אל יחר אף אדני אתה ידעת את העם כי ברע הוא: 23 ויאמרו לי עשה לנו אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו בינה | משה האיש אשר העלנו מארץ מצרים לא ידענו מה היה לו: 24 ואמר להם למי זרוב התפרקו ויתגורלי ואשלכהו באש ויצא העגל הזה: 25 וירא משה את העם כי פרע הוא כי פרעה אהרן לשמצה בקמיהם: 26 ויעמד משה בשער המחנה ויאמר מי ליהוה אלי ויאספו אליו כל בני לוי: 27 ויאמר להם כה אמר יהוה אלהי ישראל שימו איש חרב על ירכו עברו ושובו משער לשער במחנה והרגו איש את אחיו ואיש את רעהו ואיש את קרבו: 28 ויעשו בני לוי כדבר משה ויפל מן העם ביום ההוא כשלושת אלפי איש: 29 ויאמר משה מלאו ידכם היום ליהוה כי איש בכנו ובאחיו ולתת עליכם היום ברכה:

— RASHI —

לשמצה בקמיהם. להיות להם הדבר הזה לגנות, כפי כל הקמים עליהם: 26 מי לה' אלי. יבא אלי: כל בני לוי. מכאן שכל השבט כשר: 27 כה אמר וגו'. והיכן אמר? "זבח לאלהים יחרם". כן שנויה במכילתא<sup>73</sup>: אחיו. מאמו, והוא ישראל: 29 מלאו ידכם. אתם ההורגים אותם, כדבר זה תתחנכו להיות פהנים למקום: כי איש. מכם, ומלא ידו "בכנו ובאחיו":

21 מה עשה לך העם הזה. כמה יסורים סבלת שיסרוך, עד שלא תביא עליהם חטא זה: 22 כי ברע הוא. כדרך רע הם הולכין תמיד, ובנסיונות לפני המקום: 24 ואמר להם. דבר אחד — "למי זרוב" — לבד, והם מהרו והתפרקו "ויתגורלי": ואשלכהו באש. ולא ידעתי שיצא העגל הזה, "ויצא": 25 פרע. מגלה, נתגלה שמוצו וקלונו, כמו: "ופרע את ראש האשה"<sup>74</sup>:

73. במדבר ה, יח. 74. שמות כב, יט. 75. מסכתא דפסחא פרק יב.

firstborn have committed the sin of idolatry, they have betrayed this honor and, as a group, are no longer worthy of this privilege.<sup>125</sup> You, however, have proven yourselves worthy: you did not participate in the sin, and you did not hesitate to execute those guilty of it. Therefore, **be inaugurated today for the service of God—for each of you has been true to God, even if this meant contending against your grandson and half-brother.** Your acts now will serve to bring the blessing of priesthood upon you today."

21 Moses then set up a court to try those who had been legally warned and witnessed. In the course of the legal proceedings, Moses became aware of Aaron's role in the affair. **Moses then said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that forced you to accede to their demands, and thus you brought such a grave sin upon them?"**

22 **Aaron replied, "Let not my master be indignant at the people; you know that the people are bent on evil.** They are skeptical, always doubting God's ability to provide for them.<sup>120</sup> When you failed to appear when they thought you should, they did not trust in God to provide them with a substitute.

23 **Instead, they said to me, 'Make us a leader who will lead us, because this man Moses, who brought us up out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him.'**

24 I knew that as innocuous as this seemed, it could develop in the wrong direction, so **I said to them, 'Who has gold? thinking they would hesitate to part with their gold, and thus I could delay matters.'** But **they stripped themselves of it unhesitatingly and gave it to me. I cast it into the fire and** [—either by means of the magic of the magicians of the mixed multitude or by means of Micah's plate—] **this live calf emerged.**" From the perspective that Aaron himself made the calf, he said here: **"I cast it into the fire** and fashioned it into a calf, intending this to serve as a channel for Divine instruction for the people, as they requested. I did not foresee that the mixed multitude would treat **this calf** as an idol, but that is what **emerged.**"<sup>121</sup>

25 **Moses saw that the people were now exposed** to ridicule, **for** by making the calf, **Aaron had exposed** their latent shortcomings publicly, **making them an object of disgrace among their adversaries.** The whole world would soon know that the people had committed idolatry, and this would irrevocably lessen their ability to be respected as God's representatives in the world and be accorded the privileges necessary for them to fulfill their Divine mission.

26 **Moses** therefore had to punish the convicted wrongdoers publicly.<sup>122</sup> He **stood up at the entrance of the camp**, in everyone's full view, **and said, "Whoever is for God,** i.e., did not participate in the crime and is willing to act as the court's agents to execute the idolaters publicly, **join me!" And all the Levites rallied around him,** for none of them had participated in the crime.

27 **He said to them, "This is what God, the God of Israel, has said: 'Idolatry is a capital offense.'**<sup>123</sup> Therefore, **let each of you place his sword by his thigh. Go back and forth from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let each man slay** those that the court has found guilty, even if he be **his half-brother, his friend, or his relative.'** "

28 **The Levites did as Moses had ordered,** even though this meant in some cases killing their close relatives,<sup>124</sup> **and some three thousand of the people fell that day.**

29 While the Levites were executing the guilty, **Moses said** to them, "Until now, the priestly rites have been carried out by the firstborn. But now, since some of the

120. See above, 14:12, 14:30, 15:25, 16:20, 16:27, 17:3, 32:1. 121. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 11, p. 145, note 39\*. 122. Nachmanides. 123. Above, 22:9. 124. Deuteronomy 33:9. 125. *Mishneh Torah, Biat HaMikdash* 9:13.

— ONKELOS —

30 והיה ביומא דבתרוהי ואמר משה לעמא אתון חבתון חובא רבא וכען אסק קדם ?? מאים אכפר על חוביכו: 31 ותב משה לקדם ?? ואמר בכעו חב עמא הדין חובא רבא ועבדו להון דחלו דדהב: 32 וכען אם שפקת לחוביהון ואם לא מחיני כען מספרך די כתבתא: 33 ואמר ?? למשה מאן די חב קדמי אמחנה מספרי: 34 וכען איזל דבר ית עמא לאתר די מלילית לך הא מלאכי יהוה קדמך וביום אסערוני ואסער עליהון חוביהון:

30 ויהי ממחרת ויאמר משה אל־העם אתם הטאתם הטאה גדלה ועתה אעלה אל־יהוה אולי אכפרה בעד הטאתכם: 31 וישב משה אל־יהוה ויאמר אנא חטא העם הזה הטאה גדלה ויעשו להם אלהי זהב: 32 ועתה אם־תשא הטאתם ואם־אין מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת: 33 ויאמר יהוה אל־משה מי אשר הטא לי אמחננו מספרי: 34 ועתה לך | נחה את־העם אל אשר־דברתי לך הנה מלאכי ילך לפניך וביום פקדי ופקדתי עליהם הטאתם:

— RASHI —

שלא יאמרו עלי שלא הייתי כדאי לבקש עליהם רחמים: 34 אל אשר־דברתי לך. יש כאן "לך" אצל דבור במקום "אליו", וכן "לדבר־לו על־אדניהו":<sup>76</sup> הנה מלאכי, ולא אני. וביום פקדי וגו'. עתה שמעתי אליך מלכותם יחד, ותמיד תמיד כשאפקד עליהם עונותיהם — "ופקדתי עליהם" מעט מן העון הזה עם שאר העונות, ואין פרענות באה על ישראל שאין בה קצת מפרעון עון העגל:

30 אכפרה בעד הטאתכם. אשים כפר וקנוח וסתימה לנגד הטאתכם, להבדיל ביניכם ובין החטא: 31 אלהי זהב. אתה הוא שגרמת להם, שהשפעת להם זהב וכל־חפצם, מה־יעשו שלא יחטאו! משל למלך שהיה מאביל ומשקה את בנו, ומקשטו ותולה לו כיס בצוארו, ומעמידו בפתח בית זונות, מה־יעשה הבן שלא יחטא?! 32 ועתה אם־תשא חטאתם. הרי טוב, איני אומר לך: מחני. "ואם־אין — מחני". וזה מקרא קצר, וכן הרבה: מספרך. מכל־התורה בלה,

76. מלכיס"א ב, יט.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

32 If not, erase me from Your book: i.e., from the Torah. Although God is united with the Torah,<sup>131</sup> His connection with His people is even more profound, as evidenced by the fact that the Jewish people preceded the Torah in creation.<sup>132</sup> As a reflection of this, the bond between Moses and his people also transcended his bond to the Torah; therefore, if the Jewish people were to be annihilated, Moses saw no reason to remain part of the Torah. The same holds true for the bond between all true Jewish leaders and their flock.

This essential bond remains intact even when the Jew disregards his connection to the Torah: even when a Jew sins, he still remains a Jew.<sup>133</sup> Moses was therefore ready to sacrifice his connection with Torah and be removed from its pages for the sake of his people—all of his people, even those who worshipped the Golden Calf.

The lesson here for us, first of all, is that we must strive

to emulate Moses' self-sacrifice for the Jewish people. It is not sufficient to simply fulfill the commandment to "love your fellow as yourself";<sup>134</sup> we must be ready to sacrifice everything, as was Moses, for the benefit of the Jewish people in general and for every single Jew in particular—no matter how far away he may seem at that moment from God and His Torah.

On a deeper level, however, by asking God that his name be removed from the Torah, Moses sought to invoke the essential bond between himself and his people, the essence of his being that cannot be defined by a name.<sup>135</sup> Moses was telling God: "If, according to the Torah, they do not deserve to live, then reveal my essential bond with them, which will then reveal Your essential bond with them. When this essential bond is revealed, You can then reconnect with them through it and forgive them for their lapse in their observance of the Torah." [continues...]

131. Zohar 1:24a. 132. Bereishit Rabbah 1:4. 133. Sanhedrin 44a. 134. Leviticus 19:18. 135. See on 27:20, above.



## The Second Forty Days

30 **On the next day**, the 18<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz,<sup>126</sup> **Moses said to the people, “You have committed a grave sin.** We have executed those among you who were both legally warned and witnessed. We have tried by ordeal the born Israelites among you who were neither warned nor witnessed. As for those of you who have been witnessed but not legally warned and those of the mixed multitude among you who were neither warned nor witnessed, **I will now go up the mountain again to God: perhaps I will be able to secure atonement for your sin.”**

31 **So Moses returned to God and said, “I implore! This people has indeed committed a terrible sin.** But it is *Your* fault: You lavished so much gold upon them, both when they left Egypt and at the Sea of Reeds, they could not resist the temptation, and **they made themselves a god of gold.”**

32 God did not accept this argument, so Moses tried coercion. **“So, if You will forgive their sin,** well and good. **But if not, erase me from the Torah, Your book that You wrote** before creation and that will be eventually be given in its entirety in this world.<sup>127</sup> Let it not be recorded that my merit did not suffice to secure atonement for them.”

33 **God replied to Moses, “No. Whoever has sinned against Me, him will I erase from the rest of My Book,** since *he* is the one who has forfeited his right to continue carrying out My mission. *You* did not sin, so I will not erase you from history. I will, as planned, execute all those who were witnessed committing idolatry but were not legally warned.

34 Therefore, **now** that all those who sinned among the born Israelites will soon have been executed, **go, and lead the remainder of the people to where I have told you,** that is, the Land of Israel. Nonetheless, even those who did not actually sin are not entirely guiltless: they could have done more to prevent the others from falling into this sin. The fact that they did not do so indicates that either they are not sufficiently bothered by the heinous sin of idolatry or they do not care enough about their fellow Jews. Therefore, I will punish them for this in two ways: From now on, I will not lead them directly. Instead, **it is My angel that will go before you** as you lead them.<sup>128</sup> Secondly, although this shortcoming does not warrant their immediate death, I will add its demerit whenever I punish them for any other sin they may commit in the future. Thus, **on the day of My reckoning** of those sins, **I will bring them to account for their sin** in the matter of the calf, as well.”

God also expressed His anger at Aaron to Moses, and told him that He planned to exterminate his line by putting his four sons (who did not yet have any children) to death. Moses prayed on Aaron’s behalf, and succeeded in commuting the sentence by half. Thus, when the Tabernacle was inaugurated, God killed Aaron’s two elder sons, Nadav and Avihu—who in any case had already incurred the death penalty<sup>129</sup> and became further subject to it at that time for other reasons.<sup>130</sup>

126. Rashi on Deuteronomy 9:18. 127. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 21, p. 173, note 6. 128. See above, 23:20-23; Rashi on 23:20, above, and 33:12, below. 129. Above, 24:10-11. 130. Rashi on Leviticus 10:12, Deuteronomy 9:20.

— ONKELOS —

35 ומחא יי ית עמא על די אשתעבדו לעגלא די עבד אהרן: 33:1 ומליל יי עם משה איזל סק מכא את ועמא די אסיקתא מארעא דמצרים לארעא די קיימית לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב למימר לבניך אתננה: 2 ואשלח קדמך מלאכא ואתרף ית כנענאי אמוראי וחתאי ופרזאי חזאי ויבוסאי: 3 לארעא עבדא חלב ודבש ארי לא אסלק שכינתי מבינך ארי עם קשי קדל את דלמא אשיצנך בארחא: 4 ושמע עמא ית פתגמא בישא הדין ואתאבלו ולא שויאו גבר תקון ויזה עלוהי:

35 וינף יהוה אתהעם על אשר עשו אתהעגל אשר עשה אהרן: 33:1 וידבר יהוה אל-משה לך עלה מזה אתה והעם אשר העלית מארץ מצרים אל-הארץ אשר נשבעתי לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב לאמר לזרעך אתננה: 2 ושלחתי לפניך מלאך וגרשתי את-הפנעני האמרי והחתי והפרזי החזי והיבوسی: 3 אל-ארץ זבת חלב ודבש כי לא אעלה בקרבך כי עם-קשה-ערה אתה פן-אכלך בדרך: 4 וישמע העם את-הדבר הרע הזה ויתאבלו ולא-שתו איש עריו עליו:

— RASHI —

אני אומר לך להעלותם: כי לא אעלה בקרבך. לכה אני אומר לך: "ושלחתי לפניך מלאך"<sup>78</sup>: כי עם-קשה-ערה אתה. וכששכינתי בקרבכם ואתם ממרים בי — מרבה אני עליכם ועם: אכלה. לשון כליון. 4 הדבר הרע. שאין השכינה שורה ומהלכת עמם: איש עריו. בתרים שנתנו להם בחורב, כשאמרו "נעשה ונשמע"<sup>79</sup>:

35 ויגף ה' אתהעם. מיתה בידי שמים, לעדים בלא התראה: 1 לך עלה מזה. ארץ ישראל גבוהה מכל-הארצות, לכה נאמר "עלה". דבר אחר: כלפי שאמר לו בשעת הכעס: "לך-רד"<sup>80</sup>, אמר לו בשעת רצון: "לך עלה": אתה והעם. כאן לא נאמר "ועמך": 2 וגרשתי את-הפנעני וגו'. שש אמות הן, והגרגשי עמד ופנה מפניהם מאליו: 3 אל-ארץ זבת חלב ודבש.

77. שמות לב, א. 78. לעיל פסוק ב. 79. שמות כד, א. 80.

his body.<sup>143</sup> This period ended on Av 29, 2448.<sup>144</sup> Moses had not succeeded in securing forgiveness for the offenders who had not been legally warned, and God had told him that He would henceforth lead the people by proxy. **When the people heard the latter, this ominous declaration, they mourned, and no one put on his "jewelry"**, i.e., the ethereal crowns they had received when they said "we will do and we will learn."<sup>145</sup>

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

As was seen above,<sup>146</sup> God complied in a certain sense with Moses' request: He removed Moses' name from a *parashah* of the Torah where it should have logically appeared, and this *parashah* was the one in which the institution of priesthood is established. By absenting Moses' name specifically from this *parashah*, God indicated that the priesthood would be imbued with

Moses' essential bond to the Jewish people; inasmuch as this bond reveals the essence of every Jew, it served to unite all the people into one entity, enabling them *all* to both access the priesthood and be affected by it, in order to reinstate and enhance their connection to God.<sup>147</sup>

143. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, pp. 172-179. 144. Rashi on Deuteronomy 9:18. 145. Above, 24:7. 146. See on 28:1-2, above. 147. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 21, pp. 175-7.



35 Thus, while Moses was still on the mountain, **God struck the people**—those who had been witnessed committing idolatry but who had not been legally warned—**with a plague** that killed them all,<sup>136</sup> **because they had made** and worshiped **the calf that Aaron had made**. With this, all those who committed idolatry were dead, except those of the mixed multitude who had sinned but had not been legally warned or witnessed.

33:1 **God then said to Moses**, “All those who committed the sin of idolatry have now been killed, except for those of the mixed multitude who were neither warned nor witnessed. These I will not kill, for I perceive that they have fully repented of their sin. They are, of course, as guilty as the born Israelites of not having prevented the others from sinning, but for this I shall punish them in the same way I will punish the born Israelites: by adding this demerit to whatever sin I punish them for in the future.<sup>137</sup> Therefore, now that the people have been purified—by My having removed their unworthy elements, by their having accepted My gradual punishment, and by having repented—I can restore you to your former spiritual level. Therefore, **go up from here**, i.e., your present, lowered spiritual level, back to your former spiritual level.<sup>138</sup> **Go up** as well, **you and the people**, the mixed multitude **whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt**, to the Land of Israel. Their conversion is now complete and they have the legal status of full Israelites.”<sup>139</sup> (God told Moses to go *up* to the Land of Israel since it is considered the “top” of the world.) “You may take the mixed multitude there even though it is **the land regarding which I swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants,’** and they are not descendants of the patriarchs.

2 **I will send an angel ahead of you and will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizites, the Hivites and the Jebusites.**” God did not mention the Girgashites because they fled of their own accord.

3 “You will conduct the people to **a land flowing with goats’ milk and date- and fig-honey**. Still, the angel—not I—will lead you, **for I will not go up among you, lest I utterly destroy you on the way, since you are a stiff-necked people**. You are too stubborn in your tolerance of evil and too resistant to admonishment. The full manifestation of My presence is too intense to be revealed openly among you.”

### **At the Foot of the Mountain**

4 Moses’ second stay on Mount Sinai also lasted forty days. During this time, too, he neither ate nor drank,<sup>140</sup> but this was not because God miraculously sustained him,<sup>141</sup> for God had been angry these entire forty days.<sup>142</sup> Rather, Moses had been so absorbed in his interactions with God that he did not notice the demands of

136. Rashi on 32:20, above. 137. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 16, p. 410, paragraph 2. 138. See 32:7, above. 139. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 16, p. 411, paragraph 1. 140. Deuteronomy 9:18. 141. See above, 24: 18. 142. Rashi on 33:9, below, and on Deuteronomy 9:18, 10:10.

— ONKELOS —

5 ואמר יי למשה אימר לבני ישראל אתון עם קשי קדל שעה חדא אסלק שכינתי מבינה ואשיצנה וכען אעדי תקון וינה מנה וגלי קדמי מה אעבד לה: 6 ואעדיאו בני ישראל ית תקון וינהון מטורא דחורב: 7 ומשה נסיב ית משכנא ופרסה לה מברא למשריתא ארחק מן משריתא וקרי לה משכן בית אולפנא ויהי כל דתבע אולפן מן קדם יי נפק למשכן בית אולפנא די מברא למשריתא: 8 והנה כד נפק משה למשכנא קימין כל עמא ומתעתין גבר בתרע משכנה ומסתכלין אחורי משה עד דעליל למשכנא: 9 והנה כד עליל משה למשכנא נחית עמודא דעגנא וקאים בתרע משכנא ומתמליל עם משה: 10 וקון כל עמא ית עמודא דעגנא קאים בתרע משכנא וקימין כל עמא וסגדין גבר בתרע משכנה:

5 ויאמר יהוה אל משה אמר אל בני ישראל אתם עם קשה ערף רגע אחד אעלה בקרבך וכליתיה ועתה הורד עדיך מעליך ואדעה מה אעשה לך: 6 ויתנצלו בני ישראל את עדים מהר חורב: 7 ומשה יקח את האהל ונטה לו מחוץ למחנה הרחוק מן המחנה וקרא לו אהל מועד והיה כל מבקש יהוה יצא אל אהל מועד אשר מחוץ למחנה: 8 והיה כצאת משה אל האהל יקומו כל העם ונצבו איש פתח אהלו והביטו אחרי משה עד באו האהלה: 9 והיה כבא משה האהלה ירד עמוד הענן ועמד פתח האהל ודבר עם משה: 10 וראה כל העם את עמוד הענן עמד פתח האהל וקם כל העם והשתחוו איש פתח אהלו:

— RASHI —

אהל מועד. כמו "יוצא". דבר אחר: "והיה כל מבקש ה" — אפלו מלאכי השרת כשהיו שואלים מקום שכינה, חבריהם אומרים להם: הרי הוא באהל של משה: 8 והיה. לשון הנה: כצאת משה. מן המחנה, ללכת אל האהל: יקומו כל העם. עומדים מפניו, ואין יושבין עד שנתפסה מהם: והביטו אחרי משה. לשבח — אשרי ולוד אשה שכה מבטח, שהשכינה תכנס אחריו לפתח אהל: 9 ודבר עם משה. כמו "ומדבר עם משה" תרגומו: "ומתמלל עם משה", שהוא כבוד שכינה, כמו: "וישמע את הקול מדבר אליו"<sup>82</sup>, ואינו קורא "מדבר אליו". כשהוא קורא "מדבר" פתרונו הקול מדבר בינו לבין עצמו, וההדיוט שומע מאליו, וכשהוא קורא "מדבר" משמע שהמלה מדבר עם ההדיוט: 10 והשתחוו. לשכינה:

5 רגע אחד אעלה בקרבך וכליתיה. אם אעלה בקרבך, ואתם ממרים בי בקשיות ערפכם, אזעם עליכם רגע אחד — שהוא שיעור ועמי, שנאמר: "חבי כמעט" רגע עדי עבר ועם"<sup>80</sup> — ואכלה אתכם. לפיכך, טוב לכם שאשלח מלאך: ועתה. פרענות זו תלקו מיד שתורידו עדיכם מעליכם: ואדעה מה אעשה לך. בפקדת שאר העון, אני יודע מה שבלבי לעשות לך: 6 את עדים מהר חורב. את העדי שהיה בידם מהר חורב: 7 ומשה. מאותו עון והלאה: יקח את האהל. לשון הנה הוא, לוקח אהל ונוטהו מחוץ למחנה, אומר: מנדה לרב — מנדה לתלמיד: הרחק. אלפים אמה, כענין שנאמר: "אף רחוק יהיה ביניכם ובניו, כאלפים אמה במדה"<sup>81</sup>: וקרא לו. והיה קורא לו אהל מועד, הוא בית ועד למבקשי תורה: כל מבקש ה'. מכאן למבקש פניו וקן, כמקבל פני שכינה: יצא אל-

80. ישעיה כו, כ. 81. יחושע ג, ד. 82. במדבר ז, פט.

5 **God then said to Moses, “Explain to them why I can no longer manifest My presence in their midst. Say to the Israelites: ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go among you, I would utterly destroy you in a moment. If you would lapse in your behavior for even one moment and suffer a concomitant fall in spiritual consciousness, the intensity of My presence would consume you instantly. Now, you have correctly refrained from putting on your crowns. Remove your “jewelry” permanently from yourselves. As for how to erase the remaining effects of the sin of the Golden Calf, I will know as history unfolds what to do with you—how and when to do this gradually.’ ”**

6 **The Israelites thus divested themselves of their “jewelry” from Mount Horeb.**

7 Moses, seeing that God had removed His presence somewhat from the people, concluded that he should do likewise. **Moses** decided that he **would** thenceforth **take his tent and pitch it outside the camp, as far from the camp** as he could without making it inaccessible on the Sabbath.<sup>148</sup> He therefore placed it at distance of 2000 cubits from the outer extremity of the camp, this being the maximum distance it is permitted to walk outside a settled area on the Sabbath. As will be recounted shortly, Moses ascended Mount Sinai for a third period of 40 days on the following day, the 1<sup>st</sup> of Elul, 2448. During this time, he secured God’s forgiveness for the people. But this forgiveness was not fully actualized until the Tabernacle was inaugurated. During the almost six-month period between Moses’ final descent from the mountain<sup>149</sup> on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei and the inauguration of the Tabernacle on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan, God was still relatively distanced from the people. Moses therefore kept his tent where he had placed it earlier. **He would call it the Meeting Tent, where God could be “met,” because whoever sought God’s instruction or an experience of His presence would go out to the Meeting Tent, which stood outside the camp,** since the Divine presence is most palpable in the persons of the sages of the Torah and their environment. Even the ministering angels knew this and sought God’s presence in Moses’ tent.

8 **Whenever Moses went out of the camp to go to his tent, all the people would rise, each man standing at the entrance of his own tent, and their admiring gaze would follow Moses until he entered the tent.** They said, “How fortunate is he who is assured that God’s presence will follow him into his tent!” They remained standing respectfully until Moses disappeared from their view.

9 **When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and remain at the entrance of the tent, and God would speak with Moses.**

10 **Whenever all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise, and each person would prostrate himself to the Divine presence from the entrance of his tent.**

<sup>148</sup>. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 13, p. 1, note 11, from Mizrahi. <sup>149</sup>. Below, 34:28.

— ONKELOS —

11 ומתמליל יי עם משה ממלל עם ממלל כמא די ממליל גבר עם חברה ותאיב למשריתא ומשמשנה יהושע בר גון עולימא לא עדי מגו משפנא: 12 ואמר משה קדם יי חזי דאת אמר לי אסק ית עמא הדיו ואת לא הודעתני ית די תשלח עמי ואת אמרת רבייתך בשום ואף אשפחת רחמין קדמי: 13 וכען אם כען אשפחית רחמין קדמך הודעני כען ית אורח טובך ואדע רחמך בדיל דאשפח רחמין קדמך וגלי קדמך ארי עמך עמא הדיו: 14 ואמר שכניתי תהך ואניח לך: 15 ואמר קדמוהי אם לית שכניתך מהלכא ביננא לא תסקננא מכא: 16 ובמה תידע הכא ארי אשפחית רחמין קדמך אנא ועמך הלא במהך שכניתך עמנא ויתעבדן לנא פרישן לי ולעמך משנן מכל-עמא די על אפי ארעא: 17 ואמר יי למשה אף ית פתגמא הדיו די מלילתא אעבד ארי אשפחית רחמין קדמי ורבייתך בשום:

11 ודבר יהוה אל-משה פנים אל-פנים כאשר ידבר איש אל-רעהו ושב אל-המחנה וישע בן-נון זָעַר לֹא יִמִישׁ מִתּוֹךְ הָאֹהֶל: פ

◆ שלישי 12 ויאמר משה אל-יהוה ראה אתה אמר אלי העל את-העם הזה ואתה לא הודעתני את אשר תשלח עמי ואתה אמרת ידעתיה בשם וגם-מצאת חן בעיני: 13 ועתה אס-נא מצאתי חן בעיניך הודעני נא את-דרךך ואדעך למען אמצא-חן בעיניך וראה כי עמך הגוי הזה: 14 ויאמר פני ילכו והנחתני לך: 15 ויאמר אליו אס-אין פניך הלכים אל-תעלנו מזה: 16 ובמה יודע אפוא כי-מצאתי חן בעיניך אני ועמך הלא בלכתך עמנו ונפלינו אני ועמך מכל-העם אשר על-פני האדמה: פ

◆ רביעי 17 ויאמר יהוה אל-משה גם את-הדבר הזה אשר דברת אעשה כי-מצאת חן בעיני ואדעך בשם:

— RASHI —

הענין: "וראה כל-העם" — וחוון. "ונצבו" — וקמיין. "והביטו" — ומסתכלין. "והשתחויו" — וסגדין. ומדרשו: "ודבר ה' אל-משה" שישב אל המחנה, אמר לו: אני בכעס ואתה בכעס, אם פן מי יקרבם? 12 ראה אתה אומר אלי. "ראה" — תן עיניך ולבך על דבריך, "אתה אומר אלי וגו'" ואתה לא הודעתני וגו'". ואשר אמרת לי: "הנה אנכי שולח מלאך", אין זו הודעה, שאין אני חפץ בה: ואתה אמרת ידעתיה בשם. הכרתיך משאר בני אדם בשם חשיבות, שהרי אמרת לי: "הנה אנכי בא אליך בעב הענן וגו'" וגם כך יאמינו לעולם". 13 ועתה. אם אמת שמצאתי חן בעיניך, הודעני נא את-דרךך" — מה-שכר אתה נותן למוצאי חן בעיניך: ואדעך למען אמצא-חן בעיניך. ואדע בזה מדת תגמולך, מה-היא מציאת חן שמצאתי בעיניך. ופתרון "למען אמצא-חן" — למען אכיר כמה שכר מציאת החן: וראה כי עמך הגוי הזה. שלא תאמר: ואעשה אותך לגוי גדול ואת אלה תעזב, ראה כי עמך הם מקדם, ואם בהם תמאס — איני סומך על היוצאים מחלצי שיתקיימו. ואת תשלום השכר

11 ודבר ה' אל-משה פנים אל-פנים. "ומתמלל עם משה": לאחר שנדבר עמו, היה שב משה אל המחנה, ומלמד לוקנים מה-שלמד. והדבר הזה נהג משה מיום הכפורים עד שהוקם המשכן, ולא יותר. שהרי ב"ז בתמוז נשתברו הלוחות, ובי"ח שרף את העגל ודן את החוטאים, ובי"ט עלה, שנאמר: "וידי מופתת ויאמר משה אל-העם וגו'", ועשה שם ארבעים יום ובקש רחמים, שנאמר: "ואתנפל לפני ה' וגו'", ובראש חודש אלול נאמר לו: "ועלית בבקר אל-הר סיני" לקבל לוחות האחרונות, ועשה שם ארבעים יום, שנאמר בהם: "ואנכי עמדתי בקר בנימים הראשנים וגו'" — מה הראשונים ברצון אף האחרונים ברצון. אמר מעתה: אמצעים היו בכעס. כי בתשרי נתרצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לישאל בשמחה ובלב שלם, ואמר לו למשה: "סלחתי כדברך". ומסר לו לוחות אחרונות, וירד והתחיל לצוותם על מלאכת המשכן, ועשאוהו עד א' בניסן. ומשהוקם, לא נדבר עמו עוד אלא מאהל מועד: ושב אל-המחנה. תרגומו: "ותב למשריתא", לפי שהוא לשון הנה. וכן כל-

83. שמות לב, ל. 84. דברים ט, יח. 85. שמות לד, ב. 86. דברים י, י. 87. במדבר יד, כ. 88. לעיל פסוק י. 89. לעיל פסוק ח. 90. שם. 91. לעיל פסוק י. 92. תנחומא תשא סימן כז. 93. שמות כג, כ. 94. שמות יט, ט.

11 Inside the tent, **God would speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.** Moses would then return to the camp to teach what God had taught him to the rest of the people. God insisted that Moses do this, for, as He told him, “If we both act angry with them, no one will work to reconcile them with Me.” During this whole period (from the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei to the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan, 2449), Moses’ attendant, the young man, Joshua son of Nun, virtually never left the tent.

- ◆ *Third Reading* 12 Returning to the events of the 29<sup>th</sup> of Av, 2448: After God informed the people that He would no longer lead them directly, **Moses said to God, “Look: You tell me, ‘Take up this people,’ but You have not told me whom You will send with me.** You told me you will send an angel, but I do not accept this. You must lead them Yourself. If You ask on what grounds I am making this demand, it is because **You said to me, ‘I have granted you recognition** above all other men by allowing only you to approach My presence on Mount Sinai,<sup>150</sup> specifying you for this honor **by name, and you also have found favor in My eyes.’**

13 **So now, if You indeed regard me favorably, please let me know Your way of rewarding those whom you regard favorably.** By granting my request, **I will know You**—that is, I will **find out** what it means to be in **Your favor.** Consider, too, that **this nation is Your people:** they are the descendants you promised to their forefathers. So if You propose, as You did before,<sup>151</sup> to wipe them out and lead the new nation that You make out of my descendants, I am not confident that You will not wipe *it* out, in turn, at some future time.”

14 **He answered, “Very well; My Presence will go with you, and I will grant you rest** from your concern that I will not lead them directly.”

15 Moses **said to Him, “This is indeed what we desire, for if Your Presence does not accompany us** by leading us, we would rather you **not take us up from here** to the Land of Israel at all.

16 **How else can it be known that Your people and I have found favor in Your eyes, if You do not accompany us Yourself? And now, I would like to ask You something further: in this regard, let Your people and me be distinct from every nation on the face of the earth.** Let Your presence be manifest among us alone.”

- ◆ *Fourth Reading* 17 **God said to Moses, “I will also do this thing of which You have spoken, since you have found favor in My eyes and I have granted you recognition** above all other men, specifying you for this honor **by name.**<sup>152</sup> My presence will no longer be revealed openly to other nations. Even the non-Jewish prophets will only perceive Me indirectly.”

RASHI

שְׁלֵי בָעַם הַזֶּה — תּוֹדִיעֵנִי. וְרַבּוֹתֵינוּ דְרָשׁוּהוּ בְּמַסְכֵּת בְּרַכּוֹת<sup>150</sup>, וְאֲנִי לִישֵׁב הַמִּקְרָאוֹת עַל אֲפֻנְיָהֶם וְעַל סְדָרָם בְּאֵתֵי: 14 וַיֹּאמֶר פָּנֵי יִלְכוּ. כִּתְרֵגּוֹמוֹ, לֹא אֲשַׁלַּח עוֹד מִלְאָךְ, אֲנִי בַעֲצַמִּי אֵלֶיךָ, כְּמוֹ: “וּפְנִיךָ הַלְכִים בְּקָרְבִי”<sup>151</sup>: 15 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו. כּוּזוּ אֲנִי חֶפְצִי, כִּי עַל יְדֵי מִלְאָךְ “אֵל־תַּעֲלֵנוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ”<sup>152</sup>: 16 וּבִמְהֵרָה יִדְרַע אֲפּוֹא. יִדְרַע מְצִיאת הַחֹן? “הַלּוֹא בְלִכְתָּךְ עִמָּנוּ”. וְעוֹד דְּבַר אַחֵר אֲנִי שׁוֹאֵל מִמֶּךָ: — שׁוֹמְעֵין עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ:

שְׁלֵי בָעַם הַזֶּה — תּוֹדִיעֵנִי. וְרַבּוֹתֵינוּ דְרָשׁוּהוּ בְּמַסְכֵּת בְּרַכּוֹת<sup>150</sup>, וְאֲנִי לִישֵׁב הַמִּקְרָאוֹת עַל אֲפֻנְיָהֶם וְעַל סְדָרָם בְּאֵתֵי: 14 וַיֹּאמֶר פָּנֵי יִלְכוּ. כִּתְרֵגּוֹמוֹ, לֹא אֲשַׁלַּח עוֹד מִלְאָךְ, אֲנִי בַעֲצַמִּי אֵלֶיךָ, כְּמוֹ: “וּפְנִיךָ הַלְכִים בְּקָרְבִי”<sup>151</sup>: 15 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו. כּוּזוּ אֲנִי חֶפְצִי, כִּי עַל יְדֵי מִלְאָךְ “אֵל־תַּעֲלֵנוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ”<sup>152</sup>: 16 וּבִמְהֵרָה יִדְרַע אֲפּוֹא. יִדְרַע מְצִיאת הַחֹן? “הַלּוֹא בְלִכְתָּךְ עִמָּנוּ”. וְעוֹד דְּבַר אַחֵר אֲנִי שׁוֹאֵל מִמֶּךָ:

150. Above, 19:9. 151. Above, 32:10 152. Above, v. 12.

99. איוב ד, יב. 98. במדבר כד, ד. 97. שמות ט, יא. 96. שמואלב ז, יא.



— ONKELOS —

18 ואמר אחיני כען ית יקרף: 19 ואמר אנא אעבר כל-טובי על אפך ואקרי בשמא די קדמך ואחון למאן די אחון וארחם על מאן די ארחם: 20 ואמר לא תבול למחוי ית אפי שכינתי ארי לא יחויני אנשא ויתקם: 21 ואמר יי הא אתר מתקן קדמי ותתעמד על טנרא: 22 ויהי במעבר יקרי ואשוינך במערת טנרא ואגין במימרי עלך עד דאעבר: 23 ואעדי ית דברת יקרי ותחוי ית דבתרי ודקדמי לא יתחזון:

18 ויאמר הראני נא את-כבודך: 19 ויאמר אני אעביר כל-טובי על-פניך וקראתי בשם יהוה לפניך ויחנתי את-אשר אחון ורחמתי את-אשר ארחם: 20 ויאמר לא תוכל לראת את-פני כי לא-יראני האדם וחי: 21 ויאמר יהוה הנה מקום אתי ונצבת על-הצור: 22 והיה בעבר כבדי ושמתיה בנקרת הצור ושפתי כפי עליך עד-עברי: 23 והסרת לי את-כפי וראית את-אחרי ופני לא יראו: פ

— RASHI —

אף כשאעביר כל-טובי על פניך, איני נותן לך רשות לראות את פני: 21 הנה מקום אתי. בהר אשר אני מדבר עמך תמיד יש מקום מוכן לי לצרףך שאטמינך שם שלא תזוק, ומשם תראה מה-שתראה. זהו פשוטו. ומדרשו<sup>102</sup> על מקום שהשכינה שם מדבר, ואומר ה"מקום אתי" ואינו אומר "אני במקום", שהקדוש ברוך-הוא מקומו של עולם ואין עולמו מקומו: 22 בעבר כבדי. כשאעבר לפניך: בנקרת הצור. כמו: "העיני האנשים ההם תנקר"<sup>103</sup>, "יקרוה ערבי נחל"<sup>104</sup>, "אני קרתי ושתיתי מיים"<sup>105</sup>, גורה אחת להם: נקרת הצור. ברית הצור: ושפתי כפי. מכאן, שנתנה רשות למחבלים לחבל. ותרגומו: "ואגין במימרי", כגוי הוא לדרך כבוד של מעלה, שאינו צריך לסוכך עלי ככף ממש: 23 והסרת לי את-כפי. "ואעדי ית דברת יקרי" — כשאסלק הנהגת כבודי מנגד פניך ללכת משם ולהלך: וראית את-אחרי. הראהו קשר של תפלין:

18 ויאמר הראני נא את-כבודך. ראה משה שהיה עת רצון ודבריו מקבלים, והוסיף לשאול להראותו מראית כבודו: 19 ויאמר אני אעביר וגו'. הגיעה שעה שתראה בכבודי, מה-שארשה אותך לראות, לפי שאני רוצה וצריך ללמדך סדר תפלה. כששנצרכת לבקש רחמים על ישראל, הזכרת לי זכות אבות. כטבור אתה שאם תמה זכות אבות אין עוד תקוה, אני אעביר כל-מדת טובי לפניך על הצור ואתה צפון במערה, וקראתי בשם ה' לפניך, ללמדך סדר בקשת רחמים, אף אם תכלה זכות אבות. וכסדר זה שאמה רוצה אותי מעטף וקורא שלש עשרה מדות, הוי מלמד את ישראל לעשות כן. ועל ידי שזכירו לפני "רחום וחנון"<sup>100</sup>, יהיו נענין, כי רחמי לא כלים: וחנתי את-אשר אחון. אותן פעמים שארצה לחון: ורחמתי. עת שאחפץ לרחם. עד כאן לא הבטיחו אלא עתים אענה ועתים לא אענה, אבל בשעת מעשה אמר לו: "הנה אנכי ברת ברית"<sup>101</sup> — הבטיחו שאינן חוזרות ריקם: 20 ויאמר לא תוכל וגו'.

100. שמות לו, ו. 101. שם, ג. 102. בראשית רבה טח, ח. 103. במדבר טו, יד. 104. משלי ל, יו. 105. ישעיה לו, כה.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

23 You will see My back, but [lit., 'and'] My face may not be seen: The words "you will see My back" by themselves would have implied that Moses will not see God's face, especially since God had already told him, "you will not be able to behold My face, for no man can see Me and still live."<sup>155</sup> The fact that God added the words "My face may not be seen" suggests that there exists some way that it *can* indeed be seen. It is only necessary to negate a possibility, not an impossibility. Thus, for example, one would never say that a certain idea is so deep it cannot be physically touched.

Obviously one cannot touch a concept; the suggestion does not need to be negated.<sup>156</sup>

Moses, it seems, knew this as well. Maimonides explains his request to "let me behold Your glory"<sup>157</sup> to mean that "Moses wished to know the true existence of God...as one knows a person whose face one has seen."<sup>158</sup> And we know that God must fulfill the request of a righteous person at least on some level.

So God's statement, "My face may not be seen" implies that there is paradoxically a way to see God's

155. v. 20, above. 156. See *Sha'ar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*, chapter 2. 157. v. 18, above. 158. *Mishneh Torah, Yesodei HaTorah* 1:10.



18 Since Moses saw that God was acceding to his requests, he made yet another one. **He said, “Please let me behold Your Glory.** Show me how You reveal Your presence in this world.”

19 **He replied,** “As a matter of fact, it is indeed now time for Me to reveal to you *partly* how I manifest My presence in this world. When you prayed to me just now to forgive the people, you assumed that your last recourse is to invoke the merit of the patriarchs. However, I possess a higher goodness—mercy—that may be invoked when necessary. **I will therefore make all My goodness—i.e., My attributes of mercy—pass before you, and will proclaim the Divine Name before you,** showing you how to invoke these attributes in prayer. When the people proclaim that My mercy is always available, even when the merit of the patriarchs has been exhausted, I may still forgive their misdeeds. The prerogative to forgive, of course, still remains Mine: **I will show favor when I choose to show favor, and I will show mercy when I choose to show mercy.”**

20 God further **said,** “In order to demonstrate how to invoke My attributes of mercy in prayer, I will show you an image of Myself as a person praying, wearing a prayer-blanket (*talit*) and *tefilin*, proclaiming these attributes. You will then teach the people to pray this way. They should invoke My mercy while wearing *talit* and *tefilin* because a person can sin only when he temporarily forgets Me, and both the *talit* and *tefilin* are means of remembering Me.<sup>153</sup> (Although space is something I created, and thus, it is more proper to speak of space existing ‘within’ Me than it is to speak of Me existing ‘within’ space, I will nonetheless describe what I want you to do in the latter fashion.) Nonetheless, as this image passes before you, **you will not be able to behold ‘My’ face, i.e., the face of this image, for no man can see Me** directly—even in such a representative way—**and still live.** Understanding *directly* how I manifest My mercy in this world is beyond the capacity of human intellect or experience.”

21 **God said,** “**There is a place** on the mountain near where you usually stand when you communicate **with Me, and you can stand on the rock** there.

22 **When My glory passes by,** that is, when My mercy is revealed and the order of strict justice is temporarily suspended, the destructive forces can also operate uninhibited, so I will have to protect you from them. **I will therefore place you in a crevice in the rock, and I shall shield you with My hand, protecting you until I have passed.**

23 But after My attributes of mercy have passed by and the danger is gone, **I will remove My hand. You will be able to see My back** as I continue to pass, and I will roll back the *talit* off My head so you can see the knot of the head-*tefilin* resting on My neck. The head-*tefilin* are placed on the head like a crown, so by showing you how the *tefilin* are tied at the back of the head, I will be showing you something of My glory, as you requested.<sup>154</sup> You will only see the *back* of My glory—i.e., you will only understand the way I manifest My presence mercifully in this world after the fact—for this is all that human intellect can understand of it. Thus, even though I will let you see My back, **My face may not be seen.”**

153. See Numbers 15:39 (the *talit*) and Exodus 13:9 (the *tefilin*). *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 21, pp. 235-236. 154. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 21, pp. 234-235.

— ONKELOS —

34:1 ואמר יי למשה פסל-לך תרין לוחי אבניא פקדמאי ואכתב על לוחיא ית פתגמאי די הוו על לוחיא קדמאי די תברתא: 2 והוי זמין לצפרא ותסק בצפרא לטורא דסיני ותתעתד קדמי תמן על ריש טורא: 3 ואנש לא יסק עמך ואף אנש לא יתחוי בכל-טורא אף ענא ותורי לא ירעון לקבל טורא ההוא: 4 ופסל תרין לוחי אבניא פקדמאי ואקדם משה בצפרא וקליק לטורא דסיני כמא די פקיד יי יתה ונסיב בידה תרין לוחי אבניא:

◆ חמישי 34:1 ויאמר יהוה אל-משה פסל-לך שני-לחת אבנים פראשנים וכתבתי על-הלחת את-הדברים אשר היו על-הלחת הראשנים אשר שפרת: 2 והיה נכון לבקר ועליית בבקר אל-הר סיני ונצבת לי שם על ראש ההר: 3 ואיש לא-יעלה עמך וגם-איש אל-ירא בכל-ההר גם-הצאן והבקר אל-ירעו אל-מול ההר ההוא: 4 ופסל שני-לחת אבנים פראשנים וישבם משה בבקר ויעל אל-הר סיני כאשר צוה יהוה אתו ויקח בידו שני לחת אבנים:

— RASHI —

לה כתבה אחרת, שנקרעה הראשונה. אמר לו המלך: אתה קרעת אותה, אתה קנה לה ניר אחר, ואני אכתב לה בכתב ידי. כן המלך — זה הקדוש ברוך-הוא, השפחות — אלו ערב רב, והשוכבין — זה משה, ארוסתו של הקדוש ברוך-הוא — אלו ישראל. לך נאמר: "פסל-לך": 2 נכון. מומן: 3 ואיש לא-יעלה עמך. הראשונות, על ידי שהיו בתשואות וקולות וקהלות — ששטה בהן עין רעה, אין לה יפה מן הצניעות:

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

writing was the writing of God.<sup>170</sup> Moses had himself received them directly from God's hand. Yet, when he saw that they posed a danger to the Jewish people, he did not hesitate. Only a minority of the people, the most depraved among them, had sinned. But Moses did not even wait for God's approval; he immediately smashed the holy tablets in order to protect his flock from punishment.

This was Moses' true greatness: he not only gave himself up completely for his people, he was even willing to sacrifice the Torah that he had personally received from God for the sake of the lowliest of his flock. This ultimate act of self-sacrifice expresses the depth of Moses' love for each and every Jew.<sup>171</sup>

On a deeper level, God commended Moses for shattering the tablets because by doing so, their metaphysical effect on reality was ended. God told Moses that the people had lost the second innocence He had granted them at the Giving of the Torah; Moses understood then that the people had to become penitents. As was mentioned above,<sup>172</sup> the original tablets ensured that the people would not forget any of the Torah they learned. By breaking them, Moses ensured that

1 פסל-לך. הראהו מחצב סנפרינון מתוך אהלו, ואמר לו: הפסלת יהיה שלך. ומשם נתעשר משה הרבה: פסל-לך. אתה שפרת הראשונות, אתה פסל-לך אחרות. משל למלך שהלך למדינת הים והניח ארוסתו עם השפחות, מתוך קלוקל השפחות יצא עליה שם רע, עמד שושבינה וקרע כתבתה, אמר: אם יאמר המלך להרגה, אמר לו: עדין אינה אשתך. בדק המלך ומצא שלא היה הקלוקל אלא מן השפחות, נתרצה לה. אמר לו שושבינה: כתב

the people would have to exert themselves to retain their learning, and this exertion is an essential facet of the lifestyle of penitents. God commended Moses for opening the path of repentance to the people, since this was God's intention in "forcing" the incident of the Golden Calf on the people, as mentioned above.<sup>173</sup> By shattering the tablets in full view of the entire people, Moses made the path of repentance available even to those who had not participated in the sin.<sup>174</sup>

**You may keep what is leftover.... Moses became even wealthier from this lode of sapphire:** There are two types of delight we earn by studying the Torah. The first is the spiritual delight over understanding God's wisdom. This is the essence of the bliss the soul experiences in the afterlife, and we experience a taste of this bliss when we study the Torah in this world. The second type of delight is the material beneficence we earn by studying the Torah and abiding by its commandments.

Inasmuch as spiritual bliss is infinitely more sublime than material beneficence, the physical wealth Moses accrued from the lode of sapphire under his tent is referred to as the "leftovers" of the tablets.<sup>175</sup>

170. Above, 32:16. 171. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 34, pp. 217-224. 172. On 19:11. 173. On 32:6. 174. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, pp. 161-162. 175. *Or HaTorah, Bereishit*, p. 122.

- ◆ **Fifth Reading 34:1 God said to Moses**, “You shattered the original tablets because you assumed that the people were an unfaithful ‘wife’ and you wanted to destroy the ‘marriage contract.’ I commend you for doing this.<sup>159</sup> But now that it has been found that the fault was with the mixed multitude—the ‘handmaidens’ rather than the ‘wife’—it is time to restore the tablets that you broke. Since you destroyed them, **hew yourself two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will inscribe upon the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you shattered.** As it happens, you have pitched your tent over a lode of sapphire. Hew the two tablets from this material, and you may keep what is leftover for yourself.” Although all the people became rich from the wealth they took with them when they left Egypt<sup>160</sup> and when they plundered the Egyptian chariots at the Sea of Reeds,<sup>161</sup> Moses became even wealthier from this lode of sapphire.<sup>162</sup> God continued: “Make also an ark—a wooden chest—to hold the tablets.<sup>163</sup>

**2 Be ready for the morning, and in the morning you shall ascend Mount Sinai for the third time and stand before Me there, on the top of the mountain.**

**3 This time,<sup>164</sup> no man may go up with you, and no man may be seen on the entire mountain; not even the flocks or the herds may graze before that mountain.** I gave the first tablets amid great public fanfare; they were therefore subject to the ‘evil eye.’<sup>165</sup> I shall therefore give the second tablets privately.”

### The Third Forty Days

**4 So Moses hewed two tablets of stone like the first ones**, but before he ascended the mountain he made the wooden ark, so it would be ready when he would descend the mountain with the tablets.<sup>166</sup> On the following day, Elul 1, 2448,<sup>167</sup> **Moses rose early in the morning and ascended Mount Sinai as God had commanded him, and he took the two stone tablets in his hand.**

#### ⌘ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ⌘

face without seeing it. This idea can be understood from this verse if we slightly re-punctuate it, reading: “you will see My back *and* My face, [however, you will ‘see’ My face by] not seeing.”

To explain: There are two methods of grasping a concept: if a concept is within our sphere of experience, we can understand it; if it is outside our sphere of experience but still connected to it in some way, we cannot understand it but we can understand what it is *not*—that is, we can understand it by negation. We mentally abstract it from level after level of possibility until, by process of elimination, we gain a glimpse of it. On the other hand, if it is *entirely* beyond our sphere of experience, we can neither conceptualize what it is nor what it is not.

The face of God, then—which is certainly altogether beyond our sphere of experience—should therefore

logically be entirely unknowable, even by way of negation. But the astonishing implication of God’s statement, “My face may not be seen,” is that God is allowing Moses to see, i.e., to know His face—via negation.

And since Moses is the shepherd of all his people, throughout all generations, his prayer of “Let me behold Your glory” is fulfilled for all his flock. Each one of us, through revealing our inner Moses, can, through negation, know God’s “face.”<sup>168</sup>

**1 I commend you for doing this:** God commended Moses for shattering the tablets because Moses understood them to be the “wedding contract” that implicated them in being unfaithful to their “husband,” God.<sup>169</sup>

Moses surely appreciated the tablets’ awesome spiritual value. “The tablets were the work of God, and the

159. Rashi on Deuteronomy 34:12. 160. Above, 3:21-22, 11:2, 12:35-36. 161. Above, 15:22. 162. *Hitva’aduyot* 5744, vol. 2, pp. 1097-1099, 1111-1115. 163. Deuteronomy 10:1. 164. See 24:1 and 24:9, above. 165. On this term, see 30:12, above. 166. Deuteronomy 10:3; Rashi on Deuteronomy 10:1. 167. Rashi on 33:11, above. 168. *Sefer HaSichot* 5748, vol. 1, pp. 299-300. 169. Above, 32:19.

— ONKELOS —

5 וְאֶתְגַּלִּי יִי בְעֵנָא וְאֶתְעֵתֵר עִמָּה תִּמְן וְקָרָא בְּשֵׁמָא דִּיִּי: 6 וְאֶעֱבֵר יִי שְׂכִינְתָּהּ עַל אַפְוֵהִי וְקָרָא יִי יִי אֶלְהָא רַחֲמָנָא וְחֲנּוּנָא מִרְחַק רְגוּ וּמְסֻגֵי לְמַעֲבַד טַבְּרָן וְקָשׁוּט: 7 נִטֵּר טִיבוּ לְאַלְפֵי דְרִין שְׂבִיק לְעִוּן וְלִמְרוּד וְלַחֻבְרִין סִלַּח לְדִתְיָבִין לְאוּרִיתָהּ וְלְדָלָא תִּיבִין לָא מוֹזְבִי מְסַעֵר חוֹבֵי אֲבָהִן עַל בְּנִין וְעַל בְּנֵי בְּנִין מְרִדִין עַל דֵּר תְּלִיתָיָא וְעַל דֵּר רַבִּיעֵיא: 8 וְאוּחֵי מִשָּׁה וְכָרַע עַל אֲרַעָא וְסָגִיד:

5 וַיִּרְדּוּ יְהוָה בְּעֵזֶן וַיִּתְיַצֵּב עִמּוֹ שֵׁם וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: 6 וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה אֶל-עַל-פְּנֵיו וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה א יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב-חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת: 7 נִצַּר חֶסֶד לְאַלְפִים נִשְׂא עֵוֹן וּפְשַׁע וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקְהָ לֹא יִנְקָה פֶקֶד א עֵוֹן אֲבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים וְעַל-בְּנֵי בָנִים עַל-שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל-רַבְעִים: 8 וַיִּמְהַר מִשָּׁה וַיִּקַּד אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה:

— RASHI —

לְהַכְעִיס: וְנִקְהָ לֹא יִנְקָה. לְפִי פִּשְׁוֹטוֹ מִשְׁמַע שְׂאִינוֹ מוֹתֵר עַל הָעוֹן לְגַמְרֵי, אֲלָא נִפְרַע מִמֶּנּוּ מַעֲט מַעֲט. וְרַבּוּתֵינוּ דְרִשׁוּׁם: מְנַקֵּה הוּא לְשָׂבִים, וְלֹא יִנְקָה לְשְׂאִינָן שְׂבִים: פֶּקֶד עֵוֹן אֲבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים. כְּשִׂאוּחֻזִּים מַעֲשֵׂה אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם בְּיַדֵיהֶם. שְׂכָבֵר פִּרְשׁ בְּמִקְרָא אַחֵר: "לְשֹׁנָי" וְעַל-רַבְעִים. דוֹר רַבִּיעֵי. נִמְצְאוּת מִדָּה טוֹבָה מְרַבָּה עַל מִדַּת פְּרָעוּת אַחַת לְחֻמֶּשׁ מֵאוֹת, שְׂבִמְדָה טוֹבָה הוּא אוֹמֵר "נִצַּר חֶסֶד לְאַלְפִים": 8 וַיִּמְהַר מִשָּׁה. כְּשִׂרְאָה מִשָּׁה שְׂכִינָה עוֹבְרָת וְשֹׁמֵעַ קוֹל הַקְּרִיאָה, מִיָּד "וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה":

5 וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם ה'. מִתְרַגְּמִינוּ: "וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁמָא דֵּה": 6 ה' ה'. מִדַּת רַחֲמִים הִיא, אַחַת קִדְּם שְׂיִחְטָא, וְאַחַת לְאַחֵר שְׂיִחְטָא וְיָשׁוּב: אֵל. אֵף זוֹ מִדַּת רַחֲמִים, וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר: "אֵלֵי אֵלֵי לְמָה עֹזְבְּתָנִי"106. וְאֵין לוֹמֵר לְמִדַּת הַדִּין "לְמָה עֹזְבְּתָנִי". כִּף מְצַתִּי בְּמִכְלִתָּא107: אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם. מֵאֲרִיף אִפּוֹ וְאִינוֹ מְמַהֵר לְפָרַע, שְׂמָא יַעֲשֵׂה תְּשׁוּבָה: וְרַב-חֶסֶד. לְצַרִּיכִים חֶסֶד שְׂאִין לָהֶם זְכוּת כָּל-כֶּף: וְאֱמֶת. לְשֵׁלֶם שְׂכָר טוֹב לְעוֹשֵׂי רְצוּנוֹ: 7 נִצַּר חֶסֶד. שְׂהָאֲדָם עוֹשֵׂה לְפָנָיו: לְאַלְפִים. לְשֵׁנֵי אֲלָפִים דּוֹרוֹת: עֲוֹנוֹת — אֵלוֹ הַדּוֹנוֹת. פְּשָׁעִים — אֵלוֹ הַמְרָדִים, שְׂאֲדָם עוֹשֵׂה

106. תהלים כב, ב. 107. מסכתא דשירה פרק ג. 108. יומא פו, א. 109. לעיל כ, ד.

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The second type of kindness is that which God shows us simply because He loves us. This is an essential kindness, which is not occasioned by any need. This is the kindness referred to here, in the list of God's attributes of mercy, where God is described as "preserving," i.e., storing up His essential kindness, before any mention of sin.<sup>181</sup>

**He forgives sins:** The word for "forgive" here literally means "carry" or "lift." Based on this, the Ba'al Shem Tov taught that God elevates the sparks of holiness in the sin—for nothing, not even a sin, could exist unless it contained a spark of holiness—and returns them to their source. This is the essence of forgiveness.<sup>182</sup>

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi explained this idea as follows: It is indeed impossible to elevate a sinful act; such an act is evil, and the only proper treatment for it is to renounce it. In contrast, the power of desire vested in the act is not evil, for it is possible to utilize this power to desire good as well as evil. When we repent properly, we divest our power of desire of its veneer

of evil and restore it to its holy source.<sup>183</sup>

**Unintentional sins:** As a rule, it is not necessary to invoke the thirteen attributes of mercy in order to secure God's forgiveness for unintentional sins. When the Tabernacle or Temple is standing, it is possible to atone for many of these sins by repenting and then bringing an appropriate sacrifice. When the Tabernacle or Temple is not standing, fasting or charity can substitute for the sacrifice.<sup>184</sup>

Unintentional sins are nonetheless mentioned here because the principle that "He acquits those who repent properly and He does not acquit those who do not" applies to them, too. We should not make the mistake of thinking that it is not necessary to repent for unintentional sins. Although these sins are, of course, much less severe than intentional sins, they nonetheless indicate that we have not finished the process of self-refinement; if there were not some subtle spiritual dissonance within us, it would not surface as an inadvertent blunder.<sup>185</sup>

181. This is alluded to by the fact that the word for "preserving" (נוצר) can be seen as a permutation of the word for "good will" (רצון). Torah Or 69c. 182. Tzeva'at HaRibash 141. 183. Likutei Torah 4:64d. 184. See above, on 19:5. 185. Likutei Sichot, vol. 4, p. 1058, note 14.

**5** God descended in a cloud and stood with him there, and he invoked the Name of God.

**6** God passed by before him as an image of a man cloaked in a *talit* and wearing *tefilin*, and proclaimed the thirteen attributes of Divine mercy: “[1] God has mercy on the sinner before he sins; [2] God has mercy on the sinner after he sins, allowing him to repent; [3] He is a **benevolent God**; He is [4] **compassionate and** [5] **gracious**; [6] He is **slow to demonstrate His anger** by inflicting punishment, waiting instead for the sinner to repent; [7] He is **abounding in undeserved kindness** for those who do not have enough of their own merits; [8] He abounds also in **truth**, faithfully rewarding those who obey Him.

**7** [9] **He preserves** the merit of **acts of kindness** a person does **for two thousand** generations, adding them to the merits of his descendants; **He forgives** [10] **premeditated sins**, [11] **rebellious sins**, and [12] **unintentional sins**; [13] **He acquits** sinners from immediate punishment **but does not acquit** them altogether, punishing them instead little by little—unless the sinner repents, for **He acquits** those who repent properly **and He does not acquit** those who do not. **He remembers the premeditated sins of the fathers**, adding their demerits to those of **the children and the children’s children**, but only if they follow in their fathers’ misguided footsteps, and only **up to the third and the fourth generation**.” Thus, God’s attribute of reward is 500 times greater than His attribute of punishment, since He preserves merit for 2000 generations but demerit only for four.

**8** As soon as he saw the image of God’s presence beginning to pass by and heard God beginning to speak—before God shielded him with His hand—**Moses hastened to bow down low and**, without any pause, **prostrate himself** before this direct revelation of God.<sup>176</sup> When God shielded Moses with His hand, Moses’ face became radiant.<sup>177</sup>

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**6** God has mercy on the sinner before he sins: Why does a person need God’s mercy *before* he sins?

A person commits a sin either because his evil inclination convinces him that a particular prohibited act is not actually a sin (or is in fact meritorious) or because he knows it is a sin but cannot resist the urge to commit it. In either case, without God’s mercy, the person would not be able to resist the evil inclination’s power. It is God, in His mercy, who enlightens us and exposes the evil inclination’s ruse for what it is or gives us enough tenacity to resist the urge to succumb to temptation. In this spirit, King David refers to God as both “my light and my salvation.”<sup>178</sup>

Therefore, we all need God’s mercy even before we actually commit any sin.<sup>179</sup>

**7** He preserves the kindness a person does for two

**thousand generations....He remembers the premeditated sins of the fathers:** God also articulated these ideas in the second of the Ten Commandments,<sup>180</sup> but in reverse order: “who remembers the premeditated sins of the fathers...who shows kindness for at least two thousand generations.” Furthermore, in the second commandment God “shows kindness,” while here, He “preserves the kindness....”

We can explain these differences by noting that God evinces two types of kindness. The first is the kindness He shows toward someone who has transgressed His will. Such a person needs God’s kindness in order to rectify his misdeeds. This type of kindness is referred to in the second commandment, which describes God as “showing kindness” after “the premeditated sins of the fathers.”

176. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 11, pp. 153-157. 177. Rashi on v. 29, below. 178. Psalms 27:1. 179. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, p. 172. 180. Above, 20:5-6.



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9 וַאֲמַר אִם כְּעַן אֲשַׁכְּחִית רַחֲמִין קַדְמָךְ יְיָ תִּהְיֶה כְּעַן שְׂכִינְתָא דִּי בִּינְנָא אַרְי עִם קָשִׁי קָדִל הוּא וְתִשְׁבַּק לְחֻבְנָא וְלַחֲטָאָנָא וְתִחְסַנְנָא: 10 וַאֲמַר הָא אֲנָא גֹר קָדָם קָדָם כָּל-עַמֻּךְ אַעֲבֹד פְּרִישָׁן דִּי לֹא אֲתִבְרִיאָו בְּכָל-אַרְעָא וּבְכָל-עַמֻּמִּיָּא וְיַחְזִי כָל-עַמָּא דִּי אֶת בִּינְיָהוֹן יֵת עֹבְדָא דִּי אַרְי דְּחִיל הוּא דִּי אֲנָא עֲבִיד עַמֻּךְ: 11 טַר לָךְ יֵת דִּי אֲנָא מִפְּקֻדָּךְ יוֹמָא דִּין הָא אֲנָא מִתְרַף מִן קַדְמָךְ יֵת אַמּוֹרָאִי וּבְנֵעֲנָאִי וְחַתָּאִי וּפְרָזָאִי וְחַזָּאִי וּיְבוֹסָאִי:

9 וַאֲמַר אִם-נָא מְצִאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי יְיָ-נָא אֲדֹנָי בְּקִרְבְּנוּ כִּי עִם-קִשְׁה-עֲרַף הוּא וְסִלְחָתָהּ לְעֹנְנֵנוּ וְלַחֲטָאָתָנוּ וּנְחַלְתָּנוּ:

◆ שִׁישִׁי 10 וַאֲמַר הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בְרַת בְּרִית נֶגֶד כָּל-עַמֻּךְ אַעֲשֶׂה נִפְלְאוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נִבְרָאוּ בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הַגּוֹיִם וְרָאָה כָּל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה בְּקִרְבּוֹ אֶת-מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה כִּי-נֹרָא הוּא אֲשֶׁר אָנִי עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךְ: 11 שְׂמַר-לָךְ אֶת אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצִוֶּה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה גֵרֵשׁ מִפְּנֵיךְ אֶת-הָאֻמֹּת וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהַפְּרָזִי וְהַחֲזִי וְהַיְבוּסִי:

— RASHI —

תְּשַׁרְה שְׂכִינְתְּךָ עַל הָאֲמוֹת: 10 בְּרַת בְּרִית. עַל זֹאת: אַעֲשֶׂה נִפְלְאוֹת. לְשׁוֹן "וּנְפִלִינוּ"<sup>112</sup>, שֶׁתִּהְיֶה מְבֻדְלִים בְּזוֹ מִכָּל-הָאֲמוֹת, שֶׁלֹּא תִשַׁרְה שְׂכִינְתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם: 11 אֶת-הָאֻמֹּת וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהַפְּרָזִי וְהַחֲזִי וְהַיְבוּסִי: עֵמֶד וּפְנֵה מִפְּנֵיהֶם:

9 וַיִּלְךְ-נָא ה' בְּקִרְבְּנוּ. כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִבְטַחְתָּ, מֵאַחַר שֶׁאַתָּה נוֹשָׂא עוֹן. וְאִם עִם קִשְׁה עֲרַף הוּא וַיִּמְרוּ בָךְ, וַאֲמַרְתָּ עַל זֹאת: "פָּן-אֶכְלַךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ"<sup>110</sup> — אֵתָּה תִּסְלַח לְעֹנְנֵנוּ וְגו'. יֵשׁ "כִּי" בְּמִקוּם "אִם": וְנַחֲלִתָּנוּ. וְתִתְּנֵנוּ לָךְ לְנַחֲלָה מִיְּחַדָּת. זוֹ הִיא בְּקִשְׁתָּ: "וּנְפִלִינוּ אָנִי וְעַמֻּךְ"<sup>111</sup> — שֶׁלֹּא

110. שמות לג, ג. 111. שמות לג, טו. 112. שם.

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people, a level at which their success in obeying the commandments is irrelevant. Only in this way would the Divine presence be able to dwell among them and accompany them, as Moses had asked.<sup>196</sup>

But Moses sensed the danger inherent in this, too. If God were to manifest the level of His "personality" that precedes His will as it is embodied in the Torah and its commandments, this might negate the uniqueness of the Jewish people. After all, the justification for the existence of a chosen people is that God's will is important. True, Moses asked God to reveal this depth of His "personality" in order to show how special the Jewish people are to Him, but the exercise could backfire and other nations could claim, "If obeying God's will does not matter, then we can also lay claim to all You have promised the Jews."

Moses therefore asked God to ensure that this would not happen, that He would not let His presence rest on the other nations if they would invoke this argument, and God consented.<sup>197</sup> This is the meaning of the continuation of this verse: "Before all your people I will perform wonders such as have not been performed on

all the earth or for any nation." The "wonders" spoken of here are not physical miracles, for indeed, God did not do any miracles after this on the scale He had done beforehand in Egypt, at the Sea of Reeds, and in the desert until this point. Rather, the "wonder" here is the wonder of God making His presence rest on the Jewish people alone, despite the fact that they do not always seem to deserve such treatment.

These two points are the essence of this covenant. They also explain why the atonement for the incident of the Golden Calf was specifically a *half* shekel: this demonstrated that God and the Jews were still two halves of the same whole.<sup>198</sup>

**11 The Canaanites, the Amorites...**: Only six of the seven nations are mentioned here. As was noted previously,<sup>199</sup> this is because in this passage, God is reassuring the people that even though they sinned and therefore forfeited the privilege of being led directly by God's presence, the leader He will appoint as a substitute will still succeed in driving out the resident nations from the land promised them. Since the Girschaites fled on their own, there is therefore no need

196. 33:12-16, above. 197. 33:16-17, above. 198. *Or HaTorah, Shemot*, pp. 1847-1848; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5630, pp. 102-108. 199. On Exodus 23:23.



9 After God's presence had passed by, Moses prayed to God to forgive the people, invoking these attributes. God then asked Moses, "When you saw Me first writing down these attributes, did you not insist that I should only manifest them for the righteous?" Moses replied, "Yes, but You corrected me, telling me that they are meant also for the wicked!"<sup>186</sup> Moses then reiterated the requests he had made before he ascended the mountain. **He said, "If I have found favor in Your eyes, my Lord, may You, my Lord, go in our midst as You have promised."**<sup>187</sup> This is now possible because **even though this is a stiff-necked people, You will pardon both our premeditated sins and our unintentional sins.** There is therefore no concern that the intensity of Your presence will destroy us.<sup>188</sup> **And take us as Your own, unique possession.** Let Your presence be manifest among us alone, and not among the other nations."<sup>189</sup>

- ◆ *Sixth Reading* 10 To this, God replied, **"I hereby make a covenant concerning these points: Before all your people I will perform wonders such as have not been performed on all the earth or for any nation: I will distinguish them from all people by manifesting My presence only among them. And all the people among whose midst you are shall see how awesome is the deed of God which I will perform for you: Although I said earlier that invoking the thirteen attributes of mercy would be effective only subject to My consent, I now declare that they shall *always* be effective; I will always consent to their invocation."**<sup>190</sup>

### Renewing the Covenant

11 "In addition to restoring the tablets, I will renew the covenant I made with you before the sin of the Golden Calf, by repeating certain elements of it.<sup>191</sup> By repeating these commands, I will make you doubly liable for infringing them; this will impress upon you their importance.<sup>192</sup> **Mark well what I command you today. I am going to drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.** The Girgashites, however, will leave on their own,<sup>193</sup> so the following instructions apply to them only theoretically."<sup>194</sup>

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#### ⌘ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ⌘

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9 **Even though this is a stiff-necked people:** Literally, this reads, "for this is a stiff-necked people"—as if the fact that we are stiff-necked is *the* reason to forgive us!

In the verse's literal sense, then, "stiff-necked" refers to the Jewish people's stubborn idealism, which our sages defined as our innate qualities of compassion, shyness, and charity. This idealism, which compels us to act in accordance with these qualities beyond the call of duty, makes us worthy of God's forgiveness.<sup>195</sup>

10 **I hereby make a covenant:** God already made a

covenant with the people at Mount Sinai when He gave them the Torah, as has been recounted above at length. Through this covenant He and they were bound together as two halves of one whole.

However, that covenant was dependent upon the people's devotion to fulfilling God's will. Once they broke their promise to serve God faithfully, a new covenant, which would make the original covenant apply even if the people were unfaithful, became necessary.

In order to establish this type of covenant, God had to reveal a much deeper level of His connection to the

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<sup>186</sup> Rashi on Numbers 14:18. <sup>187</sup> Above, 33:14. <sup>188</sup> Above, 33:3, 5. <sup>189</sup> Above, 33:16. <sup>190</sup> Rashi on 33:19, above. <sup>191</sup> Nachmanides. See 23:10-23, above. <sup>192</sup> Rashi on v. 23, below. <sup>193</sup> See on 33:2, above. <sup>194</sup> *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 21, pp. 223-229. <sup>195</sup> *Sefer HaSichot* 5700, p. 176.

— ONKELOS —

12 אסתמר לך דלמא תגור קים ליתבי ארעא די את עליל עליה דלמא יהי לתקלא בינה: 13 ארי ית אגוריהון תתרעון וית קמתהון תתברון וית אשיריהון תקצצון: 14 ארי לא תסגד לטעות עממיא ארי ?? קנא שמה אל קנא הוא: 15 דלמא תגור קים ליתבי ארעא ויטעון בטר טעותהון וידבחון לטעותהון ויקרון לך ותיכול מדבחהון: 16 ותסב מבגתהון לבניך ויטעון בגתהון בטר טעותהון ויטעון ית בניך בטר טעותהון: 17 דחלון דמתבא לא תעביד לך: 18 ית חגא דפטיריא תטר שבעא יומין תיכול פטירא כמא די פקידתך לזמן ירחא דאביבא ארי בירחא דאביבא נפקתא ממצרים: 19 כל-פתח ולדא דילי הוא וכל-בעירך דכרין תקדיש בכור תור ואמר: 20 ובכרא דחמרא תפרק באמרא ואם לא תפרק ותנקפה כל-בכרא דבניך תפרק ולא יתחזון קדמי ריקנין:

12 השמר לך פן תכרת ברית ליושב הארץ אשר אתה בא עליה פניהיה למוקש בקרבך: 13 כי אתה מזבחתם תתצון ואת מצבתם תשברון ואת אשירי תכרתון: 14 כי לא תשתחוה לאל אחר כי יהוה קנא שמו אל קנא הוא: 15 פן תכרת ברית ליושב הארץ וננו | אחרי אלהיהם ונבחו לאלהיהם וקרא לך ואכלת מזבחו: 16 ולקחת מבנותי לבניך וננו בנותי אחרי אלהיהן והננו את בניך אחרי אלהיהן: 17 אלהי מסכה לא תעשה לך: 18 את-חג המצות תשמר שבעת ימים תאכל מצות אשר צויתך למועד חדש האביב כי בחדש האביב יצאת ממצרים: 19 כל-פטר רחם לי וכל-מקנה אשר תזכר פטר שור ושה: 20 ופטר חמור תפדה בשה ואם-לא תפדה וערפתו כל בכור בניך תפדה ולא יראו פני ריקם:

— RASHI —

לכהן והוא חלין ביד כהן, ופטר חמור מתר בעבודה לבעלים: וערפתו. עורפו בקופיץ. הוא הפסיד קמון כהן, לפיכך יפסד ממונו: כל בכר בניך תפדה. חמשה סלעים פדיונו קצוב, שנאמר: "ופדויו מכן-חדש תפדה וגו'": ולא יראו פני ריקם. לפי פשוטו של מקרא, דבר בפני עצמו הוא, ואינו מוסב על הבכור, שאין במצות בכור ראית פנים, אלא אזהרה אחרת היא: וכשתעלו לרגל לראות, לא יראו פני ריקם, מצוה עליכם להביא עולת ראית פנים, ולפי מדרש ברייתא, מקרא יתר הוא ומפנה לגורה שוה, ללמד על הענקתו של עבד עברי שהוא חמשה סלעים מכל-מין ומין, כפדיון בכור. במסכת קדושין<sup>207</sup>:

13 אשיריו. הוא אילן שעובדים אותו: 14 קנא שמו. מקנא להפרע ואינו מותר. ונהו כל-לשון קנאה — אויזו בנצחונו ופורע מעוזביו: 15 ואכלת מזבחו. כסבור אתה שאין ענש באכילתו, ואני מעלה עליך כמודה בעבודתם, שמתוך כך אתה בא ולוקח מבנותי לבניך: 18 חדש האביב. חדש הבכור, שהתבואה מבכרת בשולה: 19 כל-פטר רחם לי. באדם: וכל-מקנה תזכר וגו'. וכל-מקנה אשר תזכר בפטר שור ושה, אשר יפטר זכר את רחמה. "פטר" — לשון פתיחה, וכן "פטר מים ראשית מדון"<sup>207</sup>. תי"ו של "תזכר" לשון נקבה היא, מוסב על היולדת: 20 ופטר חמור. ולא שאר בהמה טמאה: תפדה בשה. נותן שוה

113. משלי יז, יד. 114. במדבר יח, טו. 115. יז, א.

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that when we rectify the six emotions of our animal soul, we will not have to worry about combating any drive to express them.

Until this process is complete, however, we must control our faculties of thought, speech, and ac-

tion in order to ensure that they serve only holy purposes and not those of his six unrectified emotions of our animal soul. God therefore enjoins us to "mark well what I command you today."<sup>207</sup>

207. Likutei Sichot, vol. 21, pp. 229 ff.

12 **Beware, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land that you are entering, lest they become a snare in your midst.**

13 **Rather you shall shatter their altars, demolish their sacred pillars, and cut down their sacred trees.**

14 **For you must not prostrate yourself to the god of any other nation, because it is as if the very Name of God is 'Zealous': He is a zealous God.**

15 **Beware, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they stray after their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invite you and you eat of his sacrifice.** Even though partaking of his feast may seem innocuous, I forbid it, for if you fraternize with him

16 **you will eventually take wives from among his daughters for your sons, and his daughters will stray after their gods and will lead your sons who married them to stray after their gods.**

17 **"You shall not make yourselves any molten idols.**

18 **"You shall observe Passover, the Festival of Matzos. For seven days you shall eat matzos as I have commanded you, at the appointed time in Nisan, the month of the beginning of the grain-ripening, for in the month of the beginning of the grain-ripening you left Egypt.**

19 **"Just as you must observe the holiday that occurs when the grain first ripens, so must you dedicate certain firstborn creatures to Me.<sup>200</sup> Every firstborn son, the one who opens the womb, is Mine.<sup>201</sup> So, too, all your livestock that issues from its mother as a male that opens the womb, whether of a cow or a sheep or goat,<sup>202</sup> is Mine.**

20 **Of non-kosher animals, only the firstling of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb.** You must give a lamb to a priest and then you may use the donkey as your own. The lamb remains the priest's private property and is not considered to have been sanctified in any way. **If you do not redeem the donkey, you shall break its neck** with an ax, for by not giving it to the priest you have caused him monetary loss, which must therefore be offset by your loss of the donkey. **You shall redeem every firstborn among your sons** by giving five shekels to a priest.<sup>203</sup>

**"When you come to Jerusalem for the pilgrim festivals, you shall not appear before Me empty-handed.** You must bring an animal and sacrifice it as an ascent-offering.

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to mention them in this context.<sup>204</sup>

Nonetheless, should any Girgashites return to the land of Israel, they would still be subject to the directives given here. For this reason, when these directives are repeated later,<sup>205</sup> the Girgashites *are* mentioned.<sup>206</sup>

As was mentioned previously, the six other Canaan-

ite nations allegorically personify the six unrectified emotions of the animal soul, from *chesed* through *yesod*, whereas the Girgashites personify *malchut* of the animal soul, the drive to express these unrectified emotions in thought, speech, and action. In this context, the fact that the Girgashites fled of their own accord without offering any resistance reflects the fact

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200. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, pp. 111-112. 201. See 13:11-15, above. 202. Numbers 18:17. 203. Numbers 18:16. 204. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 21, p. 226. 205. Deuteronomy 7:1-5. 206. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 21, pp. 226-27.

— ONKELOS —

21 שתא יומין תפלו וביומא שביעאה תנוח בורועא ובחצרא תנוח: 22 וחגא דשבויעא תעביד לך בבורי חצד חטין וחגא דבגשא במפקא דשתא: 23 תלת זמנין בשתא יתחזון כל-דבוריך קדם רבון עלמא יי אלקא דישראל: 24 ארי אתרף עממין מן קדמך ואפתי ית תחומך ולא יחמיד אנש ית ארעך במסקך לאתחזאה קדם יי אלקה תלת זמנין בשתא: 25 לא תבוס על חמיע דם פסחי ולא יביתון לצפרא בר ממדבחה תרבי נכסת חגא דפסחא: 26 ריש בבורי ארעך תיתי לבית מקדשא די אלקה לא תיכלון בשר בחלב:

21 שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִשְׁבֹּת בַּחֲרִישׁ וּבִקְצִיר תִּשְׁבֹּת: 22 וְחַג שְׁבִיעַת תַּעֲשֶׂה לְךָ בַּבוּרֵי קִצִּיר הַחַיִּים וְחַג הָאֲסִיף תִּקְוֹפֵת הַשָּׁנָה: 23 שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יִרְאֶה כָּל-זִכְוֹרְךָ אֶת-פְּנֵי הָאָדָם | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 24 כִּי-אוֹרִישׁ גּוֹיִם מִפְּנֶיךָ וְהִרְחַבְתִּי אֶת-זַבְלֶךָ וְלֹא-יִחַמֵּד אִישׁ אֶת-אֲרָצְךָ בְּעִלְתְּךָ לְרְאוֹת אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה: 25 לֹא-תִשְׁחַט עַל-חַמִּין דָּם-זִבְחִי וְלֹא-יִלִּין לְבַקֵּר זֶבַח חַג הַפֶּסַח: 26 רְאוּשֵׁי בַּבוּרֵי אֲדַמְתְּךָ תִּבְיֵא בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא-תִבְשַׁל גְּדֵי בַחֲלָב אִמּוֹ: פ

— RASHI —

פעמים וארבע, לחיב ולענוש על מנן לאוין שבהם, ועל מנן עשה שבהם: 24 אוריש. בתרגומו: "אתרף". וכן "החל רש"י, וכן "יורש את-האמרי"י<sup>120</sup> — לשון גרושין: והרחבתי את-זבלך. ואתה רחוק מבית הבחירה, ואינך יכל לראות לפני תמיד, לךך אני קובע לך שלש רגלים הללו: 25 לא-תשחט וגו'. לא תשחט את הפסח, ועדין חמץ קים. אזהרה לשחט, או לזרק, או לאחד מבני חבורה: ולא-ילין. בתרגומו, אין לינה מועלת בראש המזבח, ואין לינה אלא בעמוד השחר: זבח חג הפסח. אמוריו. ומכאן אתה למד לכל-הקטר חלבים ואברים: 26 ראשית בבורי ארמתך. משבעת המינין האמורים בשבח ארץך: "ארץ חטה ושערה וקפן וגו'", "ודבש"<sup>121</sup> — הוא דבש תמרים: לא-תבשל גדי. אזהרה לבשר בחלב. ושלש פעמים כתוב בתורה: אחד לאכילה, ואחד להנאה, ואחד לאסור בשול: גדי. כל "ולד" רף במשמע, ואף עגל וכבש. ממה-שהצריך לפרש בכמה מקומות "גדי עזים", למדת ש"גדי" סתם — כל-יונקים במשמע: בחלב אמו. פרט לעוף שאין לו חלב אם, שאין אסורו מהתורה אלא מדברי סופרים:

21 בחריש ובקציר תשבית. למה נזכר חריש וקציר? יש מרבתינו אמרים<sup>116</sup>: על חריש של ערב שביעית הנכנס לשביעית, וקציר של שביעית היוצא למוצאי שביעית, ללמדך שמוסיפין מחל על הקדש. וכן משמעו: ששת ימים תעבד, וביום השביעי תשבית. ועבודת ששת הימים שהתתני לך, יש שנה שהחריש והקציר אסור, ואין צריך לומר חריש וקציר של שביעית, שהרי כבר נאמר: "שךך לא תזרע"י וגו'". ויש מהם אמרים: שאינו מדבר אלא בשבת, וחריש וקציר שהזכר בו, לומר לך: מה-חריש רשות אף קציר רשות, וצא קציר העמר שהוא מצודה, ודוחה את השבת: 22 בבורי קציר חטים. שאתה מביא בו שתי הלחם מן החטים: בפורי. שהיא מנחה ראשונה הבאה מן ההדש של חטים למקדש, כי מנחת העמר הבאה בפסח, מן השעורים היא: וחג האסיף. בזמן שאתה אוסף תבואתך מן השדה לבית. אספה זו לשון הכנסה לבית, כמו: "ואספתו אל-תוף ביתך"<sup>118</sup>: תקופת השנה. שהיא בחזרת השנה, בתחלת השנה הבאה: תקופת. לשון מסבה והקפה: 23 כל-זכורך. כל-הזכרים שךך. הרבה מצות בתורה נאמרו ונכפלו, ויש מהם שלש

116. ראש השנה ט, א. 117. ויקרא כה, ד. 118. דברים כב, ב. 119. דברים ב, כד. 120. במדבר לב, לו. 121. דברים ח, ח.

"In addition to not *eating* any young animal cooked in milk,<sup>211</sup> **you shall not derive any other benefit**<sup>212</sup> from a **young animal** of the goats, sheep, or cows **cooked in its mother's milk** or in any other milk from an animal permitted to eat. This is an act of cruelty, and it is forbidden to be cruel to animals."<sup>213</sup>

211. Above, 23:19. 212. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, p. 148. 213. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, p. 150. In Deuteronomy 14:21, the very act of cooking milk and meat together is also forbidden.

21 “The prohibitions against working the land in the Sabbatical year do not apply to the other six years of the Sabbatical cycle, and thus, during those years, **you may work all six days** of the workweek, **but on the seventh day**, the Sabbath, **you shall refrain** from working. The exception to this is that during the last part of the sixth year of the Sabbatical cycle **you shall refrain from plowing**, since this influences the growth of the produce during the Sabbatical year, **and** during the first part of the first year of the Sabbatical cycle you shall refrain from **reaping**, since the produce in the fields then grew during the preceding, Sabbatical year.

“Furthermore, there is an exception to the prohibition of reaping on the Sabbath: The prohibition against working on the Sabbath applies only to instances of work I have not explicitly commanded you to do, and therefore **you shall always refrain from plowing**, since I have nowhere explicitly commanded you to plow on any specific day. However, there is one instance where I have explicitly commanded you to reap: you must harvest an *omer* of the barley crop on the second day of Passover.<sup>208</sup> This **reaping** is obligatory, and must be done even when this day falls on the Sabbath.

22 “Returning to the yearly cycle of pilgrim festivals: **You shall observe Shavuot, the Festival of Weeks**, by offering two loaves of wheat bread.<sup>209</sup> This is **the first produce of the wheat harvest** that may be offered in the Temple. (The *omer* offered on the second day of Passover is barley.)

“You shall also observe Sukot, **the Festival of the Ingathering** of your produce from the field to the barns, to protect it from the coming rains **at the turn of the year**.

23 **Three times each year all your menfolk shall appear before Me, the Master of the World, God**, who is also **the God of Israel**.

24 I am making it obligatory for you to make these pilgrimages **because I will expel nations from before you and extend your boundaries**, and you may therefore be living far away from the Temple in Jerusalem and might not otherwise visit it. Do not worry about leaving your homes unattended during the pilgrim festivals, for I promise you that **no one will be envious of your land when you go up to appear before God, your God, three times each year**.

25 **You shall not slaughter My Passover blood-sacrifice** while either the one who slaughters it, or the priest who sprinkles its blood on the altar, or any member of the group that has joined together to eat it still **possesses leavened bread**. The fat portions of the **Passover festive-offering** (or any other offering, for that matter) that must be burned on the altar must at least have begun to be burned during the night following the day the sacrifice was offered. They **may not be left** off the altar **overnight until morning**, for if they are, they invalidate the sacrifice.

26 “**You shall bring the first-ripened fruits and produce of your land to the House of God, your God**. This applies only to the seven types of produce for which which the Land of Israel is distinguished: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates.<sup>210</sup>

208. Leviticus 23:10. 209. Leviticus 23:17. 210. As seen in Deuteronomy 8:8.



— ONKELOS —

27 ואמר יי למשה כתב לך ית פתגמיא האלין ארי על מימר פתגמיא האלין גזרית עמו קים ועם ישראל: 28 והיה תמן קדם יי ארבעין יממין וארבעין לילון לחמא לא אכל ומיא לא אשתי וכתב על לוחיא ית פתגמי קמא עשרא פתגמי: 29 והיה כד נחת משה מטורא דסיני ותריין לוחי סהדותא בידי דמשה במיחתה מן טורא ומשה לא ידע ארי סגי זוי יקרא דאפודי במלכותה עמה: 30 וחזא אהרן וכל בני ישראל ית משה והא סגי זוי יקרא דאפודי ודחילו מלאתקרבא לותה: 31 וקרא להון משה ותבו לותה אהרן וכל רבבאי בכנשתא ומליל משה עמהון: 32 ובתר כן אתקריבו כל בני ישראל ופקדון ית כל די מליל יי עמה בטורא דסיני:

◆ שביעי 27 ויאמר יהוה אל־משה כתב־לך את־הדברים האלה כי על־פי הדברים האלה פרת־י אתה ברית ואת־ישראל: 28 ויהי־שם עם־יהוה ארבעים יום וארבעים לילה להם לא אכל ומים לא שתה ויכתב על־הלוח את דברי הברית אשרת הדברים: 29 ויהי ברדת משה מהר סיני ושני לוח העדת ביד־משה ברדתו מן־ההר ומשה לא־ידע כי קרן עור פניו בדברו אתו: 30 וירא אהרן וכל־בני ישראל את־משה והנה קרן עור פניו ויראו מגשת אליו: 31 ויקרא אליהם משה וישבו אליו אהרן וכל־הנשאים בעדה וידבר משה אליהם: 32 ואחר־כן נגשו כל־בני ישראל ויצומו את כל־אשר דבר יהוה אתו בחר סיני:

— RASHI —

של מקום. ולשון הנה הוא כל־הענין הזה: 32 ואחרי־כן נגשו. אחר שלמד לזקנים, חוזר ומלמד הפרשה או ההלכה לישראל. תנו רבנן: פיצד סדר המשנה? משה היה לומד מפי הגבורה, נכנס אהרן — שנה לו משה פרקו, נסתלק אהרן וישב לו לשמאל משה. נכנסו בניו — שנה להם משה פרקם, נסתלקו הם ישב אלעזר לימין משה ואיתמר לשמאל אהרן. נכנסו זקנים — שנה להם משה פרקם, נסתלקו זקנים וישבו לצדדיו. נכנסו כל־העם — שנה להם משה פרקם. נמצא ביד כל־העם — אחד, ביד הזקנים — שנים, ביד בני אהרן — שלשה, ביד אהרן — ארבעה וכו'. כדאיתא בערוכין<sup>221</sup>:

27 את־הדברים האלה. ולא אתה רשאי לכתב תורה שבעל־פה: 29 ויהי ברדת משה. כשהביא לוחות אחרונות ביום הכפורים: פי קרן. לשון קרנים, שהאור מבהיק ובלט כמין קרן. ומהיכן זכה משה לקרני ההוד? רבותינו אמרו<sup>222</sup>: מן המערה שנתן הקדוש ברוך־הוא ידו על פניו, שנאמר: "ושכתי כפי"<sup>223</sup>: 30 ויראו מגשת אליו. בא וראה כמה גדול כחה של עברה, שעד שלא פשטו ידיהם בעברה מהו אומר: "ומראה כבוד ה' באש אכלת בראש ההר, לעיני בני ישראל"<sup>224</sup>, ולא יראים ולא מודעוים. ומשעשו את העגל, אף מקרני הודו של משה היו מרתיעים ומודעוים: 31 הנשאים בעדה. כמו נשיאי העדה: וידבר משה אליהם. שלחיותו

122. תחומא תשא סימן לו. 123. שמות לג, כב. 124. שמות כד, יז. 125. נד, ב.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

29 **The skin of his face had become radiant:** It was specifically after receiving the second set of tablets that Moses' face shone. The second set of tablets signify an internalized experience of Divinity, which cannot be contested. Therefore, although they were not as miraculous as the first, the second tablets were never broken.

Similarly, during Moses' third and last 40-day sojourn in heaven, when he received the second set of tablets, his body absorbed the spirituality of heaven; he had become so refined that he was like an angel, immune to hunger. So, after receiving the second tablets—when he had not only been a guest in heaven, he himself had become heavenly—his physical body reflected this unearthly light.<sup>221</sup>

221. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, p. 179.



- ◆ *Seventh Reading 27* **GOD** said to Moses, “Write down these words for yourself, for it is according to these words that I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. These words will later be incorporated into the written Torah scroll. But do not think that because I command you to write down these words that you may also formally write down the oral explanation I am teaching you. The oral explanation must be memorized and taught verbally.”

### **Moses Descends the Mountain**

28 Moses **remained there with God** on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights; he ate no bread and drank no water. This time, however, it was not because God sustained him miraculously<sup>214</sup> or because he was so absorbed by his interactions with God that he did not notice his body’s demands;<sup>215</sup> rather, Moses did not eat because his physical body became purified, like an angel, and he therefore did not *need* to eat.<sup>216</sup> Unlike the second forty days, God showed His good will and favor during these forty days.<sup>217</sup> On the last day, Tishrei 10, 2449,<sup>218</sup> God was fully reconciled with the people and **wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.**

29 **When Moses came down** on that day from Mount Sinai for the third and final time, **and the two Tablets of the Testimony were in Moses’ hand as he descended from the mountain, Moses was not aware that the skin of his face had become radiant when God had spoken to him** and had sheltered him with His hand. Because Moses’ physical body had become quasi-angelic while he was on the mountain the third time,<sup>219</sup> beams of light shone from his face.

30 **Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face was radiant.** Because they had sinned and descended to a lower spiritual level, they were awed by Moses’ shining face and **they were afraid to approach him.** In contrast, before they had sinned, they had been able to gaze on the glory of God Himself and not be afraid.<sup>220</sup>

31 From then on, whenever **Moses** came out of his tent to teach the people something he had heard from God, he **would** have to **call them back.** Aaron would come first, stand before Moses, and Moses would teach him the lesson by himself. Aaron would then sit down to Moses’ left. Aaron’s sons would come, stand before Moses as he taught them the lesson, and then sit at Moses’ right and Aaron’s left. **The leaders of the community would then approach him, and Moses would speak to them,** repeating the lesson for them. The leaders then took their seats on either side of Aaron’s sons.

32 **After that, all the Israelites would draw near, and Moses would command them all that God had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.**

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214. Above, 24:18. 215. Above, 33:4. 216. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, pp. 172-179. 217. Rashi on Deuteronomy 9:18, 10:10. 218. Rashi on Deuteronomy 9:18. 219. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, pp. 172-179. 220. Above, 24:17.

— ONKELOS —  
 33 וְשִׁיְצֵי מֹשֶׁה מִלְּמַלְלָא עֲמֹהוֹן  
 וַיִּהְיֶה עַל אַפְוֵהי בֵּית אֲפִי: 34 וְכַד  
 עָלִיל מֹשֶׁה לְקָדָם יִי לְמַלְלָא עֲמֹה  
 מַעֲדֵי יֵת בֵּית אַפְוֵהי עַד מִפְקָה  
 וְנִפְיִק וּמְמַלִּיל עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵת  
 דִּי מִתְּפָקֵד: 35 וְחֻזֵן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵת  
 אֲפִי מֹשֶׁה אֲרִי סְגִי זִיו יִקְרָא דְאֲפִי  
 מֹשֶׁה וּמִתִּיב מֹשֶׁה יֵת בֵּית אֲפִי עַל  
 אַפְוֵהי עַד דְּעָלִיל לְמַלְלָא עֲמֹה:

◆ מפטיר 33 וַיְכַל מֹשֶׁה מְדַבֵּר אֲתָם וַיִּתֵּן עַל־פָּנָיו מִסֹּה:  
 34 וּבָבֵא מֹשֶׁה לְפָנָי יְהוָה לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ יְסִיר אֶת־הַמִּסֹּה  
 עַד־צֵאתוֹ וַיֵּצֵא וְדַבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת אֲשֶׁר יֵצְוֶה:  
 35 וַרְאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־פָּנָי מֹשֶׁה כִּי קָרַן עֹר פָּנָי  
 מֹשֶׁה וַהֲשִׁיב מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַמִּסֹּה עַל־פָּנָיו עַד־בָּאוּ  
 לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ:

קל"ט פסוקים. חננאל סימן.

— RASHI —

עם ישראל, ובשעה שהמקום נדבר עמו עד צאתו,  
 ובצאתו יצא בלא מסוה: 34 וְדַבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.  
 וראו קרני ההוד בפניו, וכשהוא מסתלק מהם: 35  
 וַהֲשִׁיב מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַמִּסֹּה עַל־פָּנָיו עַד־בָּאוּ לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ.  
 ובשבא לדבר אתו, נוטלו מעל פניו:  
 חסלת פרשת תשא

33 וַיִּתֵּן עַל־פָּנָיו מִסֹּה. כְּתִרְגוּמוֹ: "בֵּית אֲפִי". לְשׁוֹן  
 אֲרָמִי הוּא, בְּתִלְמוּד<sup>126</sup>: "סְוִי לְבָא", וְעוֹד בְּכִתְבוֹת<sup>127</sup>:  
 "הָיָה קָא מִסֹּה לְאַפְהָ" — לְשׁוֹן הַבְּטָה, הָיָה מִסְתַּכֵּל  
 בָּהּ. אִף כָּאן "מִסֹּה" — בְּגֵד הַנֶּתֶן כְּנֶגֶד הַפְּרָצוּף וּבֵית  
 הָעֵינַיִם. וְלִכְבוֹד קֶרְנֵי הַהוֹד שְׁלֵא זִוּוֹ הַכֹּל מֵהֶם,  
 הָיָה נוֹתֵן הַמִּסֹּה כְּנֶגְדָן, וְנוֹטְלוֹ בְּשַׁעַה שֶׁהָיָה מְדַבֵּר

<sup>126</sup>. כתובות סב, ב. <sup>127</sup>. ט, א.

- ◆ **Maftir 33** Whenever Moses finished speaking with them, he would put a veil over his face to hide the rays of light—for it was fitting that everyone see the rays of light only when he was teaching them God’s word—and then withdraw back into his tent. Aaron would then repeat the lesson to all the assembled, after which he would also leave. Aaron’s sons would then repeat the lesson to the leaders and the people, after which they would leave. The leaders then repeated the lesson before the people. Everyone thus heard every lesson four times.

**34** And whenever Moses entered his tent before God to speak with Him, he would remove the veil, and he would remain unveiled until after he went out to teach the people. For after God spoke to him, he would always immediately go out and tell the Israelites what he had been commanded, as has been described.<sup>222</sup>

**35** While he taught them, the Israelites would see Moses’ face, and that the skin of Moses’ face was radiant. Moses would then replace the veil over his face until he entered once again to speak with God.

The *Haftarah* for *parashat Tisa* may be found on p. 325.  
The *Maftir* and *Haftarah* for *Shabbat Parah* may be found on p. 351.



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<sup>222</sup>. Above, 31:13.

