

A hand is visible on the left side of the frame, holding a purple ribbon that runs vertically. The background is a dark, solid purple color. The text 'Ki Tisa' is centered in the middle of the page.

**Ki Tisa**

**Ceaser**



# Overview

- The people of Israel are told to each contribute exactly half a shekel of silver to the Sanctuary. Instructions are also given regarding the making of the Sanctuary's water-basin, anointing oil and incense. "Wise hearted" artisans Betzalel and Ahaliav are placed in charge of the Sanctuary's construction, and the people are once again commanded to keep the Shabbat.
- When Moses does not return when expected from Mount Sinai, the people make a Golden Calf and worship it. G-d proposes to destroy the errant nation, but Moses intercedes on their behalf. Moses descends from the mountain carrying the Tablets of the Testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; seeing the people dancing about their idol, he breaks the Tablets, destroys the Golden Calf and has the primary culprits put to death. He then returns to G-d to say: "If You do not forgive them, blot me out from the book that You have written."

# Overview

- G-d forgives, but says that the effect of their sin will be felt for many generations. At first G-d proposes to send His angel along with them, but Moses insists that G-d Himself accompany His people to the Promised Land.
- Moses prepares a new set of tablets and once more ascends the mountain, where G-d re-inscribes the covenant on these Second Tablets. On the mountain Moses is also granted a vision of the divine Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. So radiant is Moses' face upon his return, that he must cover it with a veil, which he removes only to speak with G-d and to teach His laws to the people.
- In preparation for the upcoming festival of Passover, when every Jew had to be in a state of ritual purity, the section of *Parah* (Numbers 19) is added to the weekly reading this week. *Parah* relates the laws of the Red Heifer with which a person contaminated by contact with a dead body was purified.

# Ki Tisa

- The narrative of Ki-Tisa can be roughly divided into three parts:
  - 1) The conclusion of G-d's instructions to Moses regarding the making of the Mishkan;
  - 2) The sin of the Golden Calf;
  - 3) The granting of the Second Tablets.
- Two full Parshiot -- *Terumah* and *Tetzaveh* -- have already been filled with G-d's detailed instructions on how the people of Israel should construct the Sanctuary in which He promises to "dwell amidst them." Still, several items remain to be described: the manner in which the silver for the making of the "foundation sockets" should be collected, and the making of the *Kiyyor*, "Anointing Oil" and Incense. These items, followed by a roundup of all the Mishkan's components, occupy the first 38 verses of Ki-Tisa.

# Ki Tisa



# Ki Tisa

- **Half Shekels**
- The materials for the Mishkan's construction were received "from every man whose heart impels him to give" (Exodus 25:2) -- each contributing whatever, and how much, his generosity and ability dictated. This rule applied to 14 of the 15 materials used for the Mishkan's construction. There was one material -- silver -- which G-d instructed should be contributed equally by each individual Jew:
- *And G-d spoke to Moses, saying:*
- *When you raise the head of the children of Israel after their number, they shall each give a ransom for his soul to G-d...*

# Ki Tisa

- **Half Shekels**
- *This they shall give, every one that passes among them that are numbered: half a shekel after the shekel of the Sanctuary -- a shekel is twenty gera--a half shekel shall be the offering of G-d...*
- *The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half a shekel...*
- The half-shekels should be designated "for the service of the Tent of Meeting; that it may be a memorial to the children of Israel before G-d, to make atonement for your souls."
- A water basin and pedestal, both of copper, should be made. These should be placed between the Sanctuary and the Outdoor Altar, so that the priests should wash their hands and feet from the water in the basin before "they go into the Tent of Meeting... or when they come near to the Altar to minister."

# Ki Tisa

- *This they shall give... half a shekel (30:13) The mitzvah of the half-shekel is that each should contribute a coin that [is valued at] half of the dominant coin of that time. If the prevailing coin is takal, they should give a half-takal; if it is a selah, they should give a half-selah; if it is a darcon, they should give a half-darcon.*
- *(Midrash HaGadol)*
  
- *This they shall give (30:13)*
- *G-d took a coin of fire from under His throne of glory and showed it to Moses, saying: "Such as this they shall give."*
- *(Midrash Tanchumah)*
  
- *Moses could not understand: How could a mere coin serve a person as "a ransom for his soul to G-d"? G-d answered him by showing him a "coin of fire." G-d was saying: When a person performs even a modest act of charity with the fire of passion and enthusiasm, he is indeed giving a piece of his soul.*
- *(The Rebbe of Kotzk)*
  
- *Money is fire. Like fire it can destroy and annihilate, or illuminate and warm, depending on how it is used.*
- *(Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk)*



# Ki Tisa

- *Money is fire. Like fire it can destroy and annihilate, or illuminate and warm, depending on how it is used.*
- *(Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk)*
  
- *The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less (30:15)*
- *People differ in their intellect, character and talents, in the quantity of their material resources and the timbre of their spiritual sensitivities. But all are equal in the very basis of their bond with G-d: the intrinsic commitment to Him that resides at the core of their souls. So while every man contributed to the making of the various components of the Sanctuary in accordance with their individual capacity, all gave equally of the silver of which its foundation was made. As regards the foundation of the relationship between man and G-d, the "rich man" cannot give more, and the "pauper" cannot give less.*
- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

# Ki Tisa

- **Anointing Oil and Incense**
- Take you also the best spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon twice two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels; and of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the Sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin.
- And you shall make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compounded after the art of the perfumer: it shall be a holy anointing oil.
- Moses is to consecrate the Mishkan and its vessels, as well as those who serve therein (Aaron and his sons), by anointing them with this "Anointing Oil."
- The Incense should be prepared from, sweet spices, storax, and onycha, and galbanum; sweet spices with pure frankincense; of each shall there be a like weight.
- And you shall make it an incense, a confection after the art of the perfumer, well-blended, pure and holy.

# Ki Tisa

- *And Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet... when they come near to the Altar to minister (30:19)*
- *Every person, upon waking in the morning... should wash his hands with [a minimum of] a quarter-log of water poured from a utensil...*
- *Man entrusts his soul [to G-d at night] tired and exhausted, and G-d restores it to him rejuvenated and refreshed so that he may serve his Creator with all his capacity, this being the purpose of man. Therefore we should sanctify ourselves with His holiness and wash our hands with water from a vessel before serving Him and ministering to Him, like the Kohen who would wash his hands from the Basin each day before beginning his service...*
- *(Shulchan Aruch HaRav)*
- *All dirt and all filth betake themselves to the "other side" (the forces of evil) which derives sustenance from them; therefore it is a mitzvah to wash the hands...*
- *(Zohar)*

# Ki Tisa

- *This shall be a holy anointing oil unto Me throughout your generations (30:31)*
- *Many miracles occurred with the anointing oil which Moses prepared in the desert.*
- *Originally it only measured twelve loggin (a "hin" is the equivalent of 12 loggin, or about 4 liters). Now, consider how much the cauldron absorbed, how much the herbs absorbed, and how much the fire burned, and yet it sufficed for the anointing of the Tabernacle and its vessels, and Aaron and his sons, on each of the seven days of consecration; and High Priests and kings [throughout the generations] also were anointed with it... And that very oil remains in reserve for the [rebuilding of the Sanctuary] in the Messianic Era to come, as it is written: "This shall be a holy anointing oil unto Me throughout your generations."*
- *(Talmud, Hora'yot 11b)*

# Ki Tisa

- *And you shall make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the perfumer (30:35)*
- *Since many animals were slaughtered in the sacred place each day, their flesh butchered and burned and their intestines cleaned, its smell would doubtless have been like the smell of a slaughterhouse.... Therefore G-d commanded that the Ketoret be burned twice a day, each morning and afternoon, to lend a pleasing fragrance to the Sanctuary and to the garments of those who served in it.*
- *(Maimonides' Guide to the Perplexed)*
- *Many of the commentaries object to this explanation of the function of the Ketoret; in the words of Rabbeinu Bechayei, "G-d forbid that the great principle and mystery of the Ketoret should be reduced to this mundane purpose." Chassidic teaching, however, applies Maimonides' words as a reference to the spiritual "stench" of the Animal Soul within man, whose sacrifice and dedication to G-d was the deeper significance of the animal offerings brought in the Sanctuary. This explains why the Ketoret was the most sacred component of the Yom Kippur service: the Ketoret represents the power of teshuvah, the sublimation of "foul odors" of man's failings and iniquities into the "sweet fragrance" of a new, invigorated bond with G-d.*

# Ki Tisa

- **Betzalel and Ahaliav**
- Having detailed the construction of the Mishkan and all its components, G-d proceeds to designate those who shall be in charge of the work:
- See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.
- And I have filled him with the spirit of G-d, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; to contrive works of art, to work in gold, and in silver, and in copper; and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.
- And I, behold, I have appointed with him Ahaliav, the son of Achisamach, of the tribe of Dan...

# Ki Tisa

- **Betzalel and Ahaliav**
- Betzalel and Ahaliav shall oversee a team of "wise hearted" artisans, who shall make:
- The Tent of Meeting, the Ark of the Testimony and the cover that is on it, and all the vessels of the Tent;
- The table and its vessels, the pure Menorah with all its vessels, and the Altar of Incense;
- The Altar of Burnt Offering with all its vessels, and the Basin and its pedestal;
- The prestigious vestments and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister;
- The Anointing Oil, and Incense of Spices for the holy place.
- "According to all that I have commanded you shall they do."

# Ki Tisa

- **Betzalel and Ahaliav**
- *See, I have called by name Bezalel... of the tribe of Judah... and I have appointed with him Ahaliav... of the tribe of Dan (31:2, 6)*
- *No tribe was greater than Judah and none more lowly than Dan... Said G-d: "Let the one come and be associated with the other, so that no man may despise [his fellow] or be arrogant, for both great and small are equal in G-d's sight."*
- *(Midrash Tanchuma)*



# Ki Tisa

- **Shabbat**
- At Marah, the people of Israel had been instructed to observe the seventh day of rest--a mitzvah which was repeated to them when the manna began to fall, and again as the fourth of the Ten Commandments proclaimed at Sinai. Now, when being told to construct the Mishkan, they are once more commanded:
- And the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.
- It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days G-d made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.

# Ki Tisa

- *And the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath (31:16)*
- *There are two dimensions to Shabbat, referred to in the dual commandment to "keep" it and to "make" it. It is a day possessing an intrinsic holiness from the very beginning of time; this holiness the people of Israel are commanded to keep and preserve. And then there is the command "to make the Shabbat"--to impart greater sanctity and meaning to it by our actions.*
- *(Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch)*
- *And on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed (31:17)*
- *Resh Lakish said: On Shabbat eve, G-d imparts an additional soul to the person, and at Shabbat's end, He takes it away.*
- *(Talmud, Beitza 16a)*

# Ki Tisa

- *The Sages note the similarity of the Hebrew word kechaloto--"when he had concluded"--with the word kekallato, "as his bride," citing numerous ways in which the Torah, referred to in this verse, and the Shabbat, spoken of in the previous verse, are analogous to a bride:*
- *Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: If one gives a discourse on the Torah which is not as pleasant to those who hear it as the bride is pleasing to her spouse, then it were best that he should not have said it at all. Why is that? Because when G-d gave the Torah to Israel, it was then as dear to them as a bride is to her spouse, as it says, "And he gave to Moses kechaloto."*
- *Just as a bride keeps herself secluded the whole time she is in her father's house, none knowing her, and only revealing her face when she is about to enter the bridal chamber, as if she were thus proclaiming: "Anyone who can testify anything against me, let him come and do so"--so must a Torah scholar be as modest as this bride, but he must be renowned for his good deeds just as this bride...*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*
- *Just as a bride comes to her groom beautiful, bejeweled and perfumed, so does the Shabbat come to the people of Israel... Just as the groom dresses in his finest raiment to receive his bride, so does the Jew receive the Shabbat. Just as a groom is pampered and absolved from working all his nuptial days, so is the Jew on Shabbat.*
- *(Midrash)*

# Ki Tisa

- **The Golden Calf**
- The Torah now resumes the narrative (left off at the end of the Parshah of Mishpatim) of the events that followed Moses' 40-day sojourn on Mount Sinai to receive the Torah from G-d:
- And He gave to Moses, when He had concluded speaking to him upon Mount Sinai, two Tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of G-d.
- But down below in the Israelite camp, the people were already abandoning their newly-forged covenant...
- When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people converged upon Aaron, and said to him: "Arise, make us a god which shall go before us; for as for this man Moses, who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him."

# Ki Tisa

- **The Golden Calf**
- *And Aaron said to them: "Remove the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me." And all the people unloaded the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.*
- *And he received the gold at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it a molten calf. And they proclaimed: "This is your god, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt."*
- *And Aaron saw; and he built an altar before it, and proclaimed: "Tomorrow is a feast to G-d!"*
- *And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to disport themselves.*

# Ki Tisa

- *And He gave to Moses, when He had concluded speaking to him upon Mount Sinai, two Tablets of the Testimony (31:18)*
- *This means that when G-d handed the Tablets to Moses, the people had already made the Golden Calf! Thus the Midrash says:*
- *It is usual for an earthly king to bestow gifts on his subjects and furnish supplies for them, as long as they are loyal to him, being then obliged to support them; but as soon as they rebel against him, G-d forbid, he has no obligation whatsoever towards them, and he immediately cuts off their supplies as a penalty for denying his royal authority. With G-d, however, it is not so; for while they were busy provoking Him to anger below, He was occupied in heaven with bestowing upon them a Torah of life...*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

# Ki Tisa

- *When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain (32:1)*
- *When Moses ascended the mountain, he said to them: After forty days, in the first six hours of the day, I shall return. They thought that the day of his ascent should be counted as one of the forty, while he meant forty full, 24-hour days. In truth, the day of his ascent--Sivan 7--should not have been counted, since it did not include its previous night, meaning that the forty days ended on Tammuz 17.*
- *On the 16th of Tammuz Satan came and filled the world with darkness and confusion. Said he to them: "Where is your teacher Moses?" "He has ascended on high," they answered him. "The sixth hour has come," said he to them, but they disregarded him. "He is dead"--but they disregarded him. So Satan showed them a vision of Moses' bier. This is what they said to Aaron, "For this man Moses, who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him."*
- *(Rashi; Talmud, Shabbat 89a).*

# Ki Tisa

- *The people converged upon Aaron, and said to him: "Arise, make us a god..." And Aaron saw; and he built an altar before it (32:1-5)*
- *What did Aaron see? He saw his nephew Hur slain before him. [As related above in Exodus 24:14, Moses placed Aaron and Hur, the son of Miriam and Caleb, in charge of the camp when he ascended the mountain.] When the people demanded an idol, Hur arose and rebuked them, whereupon they rose against him and killed him. They then came to Aaron, and said to him: "We will do to you what we have done to this man"...*
- *Aaron tried to busy them with tasks. He said to them: "Remove the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives"--a most difficult thing, for the women, who saw all the miracles that G-d performed in Egypt, at the Sea and at Sinai, would surely not participate... When the women did not do as the men demanded, the men removed their own jewelry, as it says, "And all the people unloaded the golden earrings which were in their ears." .....*



# Ki Tisa

- ..... They wanted to build the altar together with Aaron, but he would not allow them, saying: "Allow me to build it by myself, for it is not befitting the respect due to the altar that another should build it." Aaron's intention in this was to delay matters, saying to himself: "By the time I build it all by myself Moses will come down." But when he had built it Moses had not yet descended.
- What did Aaron do? He said: I shall postpone it until tomorrow, as it is written: "And [Aaron] proclaimed: Tomorrow is a feast to G-d!" His intention was to the true G-d, being certain that by the morrow Moses would come and they will serve G-d. But they "Arose early in the morning..."
- (Midrash Tanchuma; Rashi)
- And all the people unloaded the golden earrings which were in their ears... (32:3)
- Said Rabbi Aba bar Achah: There's no understanding the character of this people! They're solicited for the Golden Calf, and they give; they're solicited for the Sanctuary--they give.
- (Jerusalem Talmud, Shekalim 1:1)

# Ki Tisa

- **Moses Pleads for His People**
- And G-d said to Moses: "Go down, for your people, which you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have turned aside quickly from the way which I commanded them..."
- "Now therefore let Me alone, that my wrath may burn against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of you a great nation."
- And Moses besought the L-rd his G-d, and said: "Why, O G-d, should Your wrath burn against Your people, whom You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should Egypt speak, and say: 'In evil did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce anger, and relent of this evil against Your people!"
- "Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, Your servants, to whom You did swear by Your own self, and did say to them: 'I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give to your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.'"
- And G-d regretted the evil which he thought to do to His people.

# Ki Tisa

- *And G-d said to Moses: "Go down..." (32:7)*
- *What is meant by "Go down"? Rabbi Elazar said: G-d said to Moses: "Moses, descend from your greatness. Have I given you greatness other than for the sake of Israel? And now Israel have sinned; then what do I want with you?"*
- *Straightaway Moses became powerless and had no strength to speak. But when G-d said, "Let Me alone that I may destroy them," Moses said to himself: "This depends upon me," and he stood up and prayed vigorously and begged for mercy. It was like the case of a king who became angry with his son and began beating him severely. His friend was sitting before him but was afraid to say a word until the king said, "Were it not for my friend here who is sitting before me, I would kill you." Said the friend to himself, "This depends on me," and immediately he stood up and rescued him.*
- *Rabbi Abbahu said: Were it not explicitly written, "Let Me alone that I may destroy them," it would be impossible to say such a thing: this indicates that Moses took hold of G-d like a man who seizes his fellow by his garment, and said to Him: "Master of the Universe! I will not let You go until You forgive and pardon them."*
- *(Talmud, Brachot 32a)*

# Ki Tisa

- *And G-d said to Moses: "Go down, for your people, which you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, have become corrupt" (32:7)*
- *G-d does not say, "the people have become corrupt," but "your people." Whereupon Moses said: "Master of the Universe! Since when are they my people?" Said G-d: "They are your people, for when they were yet in Egypt, I told you that I will bring forth 'My hosts, My people the children of Israel' (Exodus 7: 4). Did I not instruct you not to allow a mixed multitude to be mingled with them? But you, being kindly and righteous, did say to Me: 'The penitent must always be accepted.' Knowing, however, what they would one day do, I disagreed, but nevertheless I fulfilled your request, with the result that it was just these people who made the Calf."*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

# Ki Tisa

- *They have turned aside quickly from the way which I commanded them (32:8)*
- *This can be compared to a king who betrothed a lady with two precious pearls which he gave her himself, sending another eight with his messenger. While she was flirting with her paramour, she lost the two pearls the king had given her, and when the king discovered this, he banished her from his house. Her intimate friend then came to plead with the king on her behalf, saying: "Your Majesty, when will you find another so beautiful and praiseworthy as she is?" The king replied: "By heaven! I gave her myself two pearls and sent another eight with you. Should she not have at least lost two of those that I sent with you, even three of them or even all of them? But so much did she insult me, that she must actually lose the two pearls which I myself gave her! (The first two of the Ten Commandments, "I am the L-rd your G-d," and "You shall have no other gods before Me"--which the people violated by worshipping the Golden Calf--were given by G-d directly to them, while the other eight were conveyed through Moses).*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

# Ki Tisa

- **The Breaking of the Tablets**
- Moses descends the mountain, carrying the Two Tablets on which the Ten Commandments were "inscribed from end to end, on the one side and on the other were they written... And the tablets were the work of G-d, and the writing was the writing of G-d, engraved upon the tablets."
- Joshua, who had been awaiting Moses return at the very foot of the mountain, wonders at the sounds coming from the camp. "There is a noise of war in the camp," he says to his master.
- "These are not shouts of victory," says Moses, "neither is it the wail of defeat. I hear the sound of singing."

# Ki Tisa

- **The Breaking of the Tablets**
- And it came to pass, as soon as he came near to the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, and broke them at the foot of the mountain.
- And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.
- Moses admonishes Aaron for having "brought a great sin" upon the people. Aaron replies that he had no choice but to go along with their demands.
- Moses stands at the gate of the camp and calls out:
- "Whoever is for G-d, come to me!"
- The tribe of Levi gather round him. Moses instructs them to put to death the major culprits in the making of the Calf, even if they be their "brother, friend or close relation." The Levites execute about 3,000 men. "Today you are ordained," says Moses, as the tribe dedicated to the service of G-d.

# Ki Tisa

- *Why, O G-d, should Your wrath burn against Your people? (32:11)*
- *When Israel committed that act, Moses arose to appease G-d and said: "Master of the Universe! They have given You an assistant, and You are annoyed with them? Why, this Calf which they have made will be Your assistant: You will cause the sun to rise while it will cause the moon to rise; You will look after the stars and it will see to the constellations; You will cause the dew to descend and it will cause the winds to blow; You will make the rains come down, while it will be responsible for the growth of plants."*
- *Said G-d to him: "Moses! You err as they do! For there is nothing real in it."*
- *Said Moses: "If this be the case, 'Why should Your wrath burn against Your people?'"*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*



# Ki Tisa

- *Why, O G-d, should Your wrath burn against Your people, whom You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt? (32:11)*
- *What was his idea in mentioning here the going out of Egypt? Because it was thus that Moses pleaded: "Master of the Universe, see from which place You have brought them forth--from Egypt where everyone worships lambs."*
- *Said Rabbi Huna in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: It can be compared to a wise man who opened a perfumery shop for his son in a street frequented by harlots. The street did its work, the business also did its share, and the son's youth likewise contributed its part, with the result that the son fell into evil ways. When the father came and caught him among the harlots, he began to shout: "I will kill you!" But his friend was there, and he said: "You were the cause of this youth's corruption, and you shout at him? You set aside all other professions and have taught him only to be a perfumer; you skipped over all other districts and opened a shop for him just in the street where harlots dwell..."*
- *This is what Moses said: "Master of the Universe! You passed over the entire world to have Your children to be enslaved only in Egypt, where all worshipped lambs... Bear in mind whence You have brought them forth!"*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

# Ki Tisa

- *This is what Moses said: "Master of the Universe! When I asked You what their merit was that You should redeem them, since they are idolaters, You said: 'You see them only now as idolaters, but I can foresee them departing from Egypt, and My dividing the Red Sea for them, and bringing them into the wilderness, and giving them the Torah and revealing Myself unto them face to face, and they accepting My kingship--yet denying Me at the end of forty days by making the Calf!' (This is the meaning of what G-d said to Moses at the burning bush, "I have heard their cries"--I hear already their cries around the Calf).*
- *"Since You have told me of their making a Golden Calf long before You did deliver them," argued Moses, "why do You seek to slay them now that they have made it?" It was for this reason that Moses mentioned the Exodus from Egypt in his plea for mercy.*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

# Ki Tisa

- *It can be compared to a king who had an uncultivated field and who said to a tenant-laborer: "Go improve it and convert it into a vineyard." The laborer went and tended the field and planted it as a vineyard. The vines grew and produced wine, which, however, became sour. When the king saw that the wine had become sour, he said to the laborer: "Go and cut it all down; what is the use to me of a vineyard that produces vinegar?" But the laborer pleaded: "O my lord and king! Consider what sums you invested before the vineyard was planted, and now You want to cut it all down! Do not give me the reply, 'But its wine becomes sour,' for this is due to the newness of the vineyard, and a freshly-planted vineyard cannot produce good wine."*
- *Similarly, when Israel made the Golden Calf, G-d intended to destroy them, but Moses pleaded: "Master of the Universe! Did You not bring them forth from Egypt, a place of idol-worshippers? They are yet young, as it for it says (Hosea 11:1), 'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.' Be patient with them yet awhile and go with them, and they will yet perform good deeds before You."*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

# Ki Tisa

- **Estrangement and Rapprochement**
- On the following day,
- Moses returned to G-d, and said: "I beseech You: this people has sinned a great sin, and they have made them a god of gold.
- "Now, if you will forgive their sin--; and if not, pray, blot me out of Your book which you have written."
- G-d says to Moses: "Whoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." He tells Moses to lead them on to the Promised Land, but that His own presence will not go with them; instead, He will send His angel. G-d also says that while He will not mete out the full punishment of their sin, "On the day that I remember, I will remember their sin upon them."
- Moses moves his tent outside of the camp, and "all who sought G-d" would go there. There, "G-d would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his fellow." Moses' faithful servant, Joshua, remains at all times in his master's tent.
- Moses is not reconciled with G-d's reserved forgiveness. Again he approaches G-d, and says: "If Your own presence does not go [with us], do not take us out of here." This time G-d acquiesces: "My presence shall go, and I shall lead you."
- "Show me Your glory," begs Moses.
- "You cannot see My face," says G-d "for no man shall see Me, and live... You shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

# Ki Tisa

- *Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel (32:13)*
- *Moses pleaded: "Master of the Universe! Why are You angry with Israel?" "Because they have broken the Ten Commandments," said G-d. "Well," said Moses, "they possess a source from which they can make repayment... Remember that You tested Abraham with ten trials? Let those ten serve as compensation for these ten." This is why Moses said, "Remember Abraham...."*
- *Another interpretation:*
- *Moses spoke thus: "Master of the Universe! Do the dead live [in the World to Come]?"*
- *Said G-d: "Moses, have you become a heretic?"*
- *But Moses answered: "If the dead are not brought to life in the World to Come, then You are free to do all that You intend. But if they be alive, what will You say to the Patriarchs when they will arise and seek from You fulfillment of the promise which You have made them? What answer will You give them? For did You not promise them that You would increase their children as the stars of heaven?"*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

# Ki Tisa

- *And G-d regretted the evil which he thought to do to His people (32:14)*
- *Moses absolved his Creator of His vow. When Israel made the Calf, Moses began to persuade G-d to forgive them; but G-d said: "Moses, I have already taken an oath that 'He that sacrifices unto the gods... shall be destroyed' (Exodus 22:19), and I cannot retract an oath which has proceeded from My mouth."*
- *Said Moses: "Master of the Universe! Did You not grant me the power of annulment of oaths? (see Numbers 30:3)? If a jurist desires that others should respect his laws, he must be the first to observe them. Since You have commanded me concerning the annulment of vows, it is only right and proper that You should follow this procedure Yourself."*
- *Whereupon Moses wrapped himself in his tallit and seated himself in the posture of a rabbinical judge, and G-d stood before him as one asking for the annulment of his vow; for so it says, "Then I sat in the mount" (Deuteronomy 9:9)...*
- *What did Moses say to Him? A most difficult thing. Rabbi Yochanan said: The difficult thing he said was: "Do You now regret Your vow?" G-d replied: "I regret now the evil which I said I would do unto My people." When Moses heard this, he proclaimed: "Be it absolved for You, be it absolved for You. There is neither vow nor oath any longer..."*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

# Ki Tisa

- *[When Moses] saw the calf, and the dancing... he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain (32:19)*
- *Moses already knew about Israel's worship of the Golden Calf; but when he saw how much they were enjoying their fall, he realized that their covenant with G-d had been utterly repudiated by them.*
- *(Soforno)*
- *And he threw the tablets out of his hands (32:19)*
- *The Tablets were each six handbreadths long and three handbreadths wide. Moses held two handbreadths [of the Tablets' length], G-d held two handbreadths, and in between were two handbreadths of space. Moses' hands prevailed, and he grabbed hold of the Tablets and broke them.*
- *(Jerusalem Talmud, Taanit 4:5)*

# Ki Tisa

- The Second Tablets
- And G-d said to Moses: "Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first; and I will write upon these tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you did break.
- "Be ready in the morning; and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain.
- "And no man shall come up with you, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mountain..."On the mountain, G-d reveals to Moses His "Thirteen Attributes of Mercy":
- G-d, G-d, mighty, merciful and gracious; long-suffering, and abundant in love and truth; keeping kindness for thousands [of generations], forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; who clears guilt]...
- G-d renews His covenant with Israel.
- And Moses was there with G-d forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water; and he wrote upon the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten Words.
- When Moses descends from the mountain, his face shines with a divine light. So overpowering is its luminance, that Moses wears a veil to shield the people from it, which he removes only when he conveys to them the laws and teachings he receives from G-d.



# Ki Tisa

- *Engraved (charut) on the Tablets (32:16)*
- *Had the First Tablets not been broken, no nation or people could have subjugated the Jewish people, as it is written, "Charut on the Tablet." Do not read charut (engraved), but cheirut (free); on account of these Tablets, Israel would have remained ever free.*
- *(Talmud and Rashi, Eruvin 54a)*
- *Rabbi Judah says: [They would have been] free from the pain of exile. Rabbi Nechemiah says: [They would have been] free from the angel of death.*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

# Ki Tisa

- *And Moses returned to G-d, and said: "... This people has sinned a great sin (32:31)*
- *What did Moses do? He went up to G-d, and said: "This people has sinned a great sin!" When G-d saw this He said to him: "Moses, you, too, are angry with them? We cannot both be angry. When you see Me pour hot water, you pour cold, and when you see Me pour cold, you pour hot..."*
- *(Yalkut Shimoni)*

# Ki Tisa

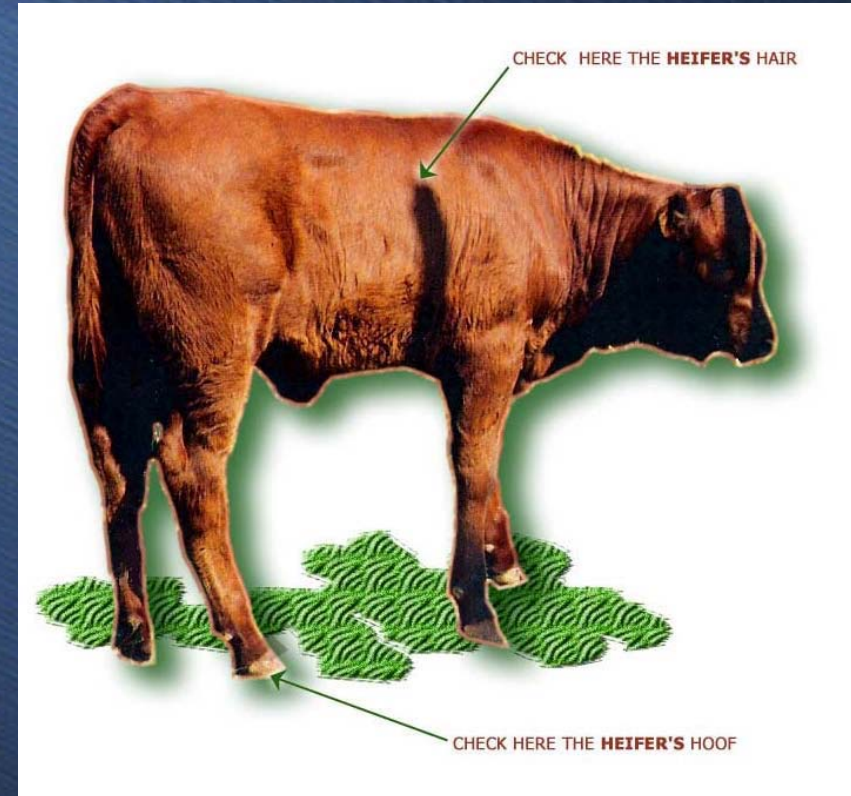
- *Blot me out of Your book which you have written (Exodus 32:32)*
- *Moses' name appears in every Parshah in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers (the Book of Genesis predates Moses' birth; Deuteronomy consists wholly of a first-person narrative spoken by Moses). Every Parshah, that is, except for one: the Parshah of Tetzaveh (Exodus 27:20--30:10), which includes not a single mention of Moses' name. The reason for this is that Moses said to G-d: "If You do not [forgive Israel], blot me out of Your book which you have written." For the censure of a righteous person, even if made conditional on an unfulfilled stipulation, always has some effect.*
- *(Baal HaTurim)*

# Ki Tisa

- *While Moses' name does not appear in the Parshah of Tetzaveh, Moses himself is very much present: the entirety of Tetzaveh consists of G-d's words to Moses. Indeed, the Parshah's first word is ve'attah, "and you"--the "you" being the person of Moses.*
- *Indeed, the word "you" connotes its subject's very self, while a person's name is a more superficial handle on his personality. This means that Moses is more present in this Parshah--that is, present in a deeper, more essential way--than any mention of his name could possibly express.*
- *This is fully in keeping with the Baal HaTurim's explanation. Because Moses was prepared to forgo mention of his name in the Torah for the sake of his people, he merited that his quintessential self--the level of self that cannot be captured by any name or designation--be eternalized by the Torah. It is this level of Moses' self that is expressed by his "nameless" presence in the Parshah of Tetzaveh.*
- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*
- *On the day that I remember, I will remember their sin upon them (32:34)*
- *There is no misfortune that does not have in it something of the sin of the Golden Calf.*
- *(Talmud, Sanhedrin 102a)*

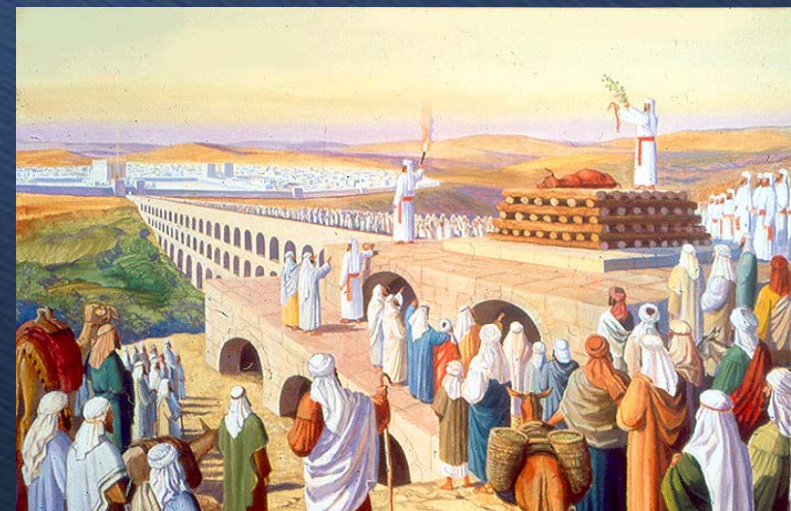
# Ki Tisa

- **The Red Heifer**
- In addition to the regular Parshah, this week's reading is supplemented with the section of Parah (Numbers 19), in which G-d commands to Moses the law of the Red Heifer.



# Ki Tisa

- The Red Heifer
- (Parah is read in preparation for the upcoming festival of Passover. Three times a year, on Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot, all Jews were obligated to come to the Holy Temple and offer *korbanot*; on Passover, the *korban pesach* ("paschal lamb") was also brought. To enter the Holy Temple and to eat the meat of the offerings, one had to be in a state of *taharah*, ritual purity. Parah instructs how a person rendered ritually impure by contact with a dead body is purified.)



# Ki Tisa

- **The Red Heifer**
- *And G-d spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying: This is the decree ("chok") of the Torah which G-d has commanded.*
- *Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring to you a red heifer without defect, in which there is no blemish, and upon which never came a yoke.*



# Ki Tisa

- **The Red Heifer**
- *And you shall give her to Elazar the priest, that he may bring her outside the camp, and she shall be slaughtered before him. And Elazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood towards the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times.*
- *And the heifer shall be burnt in his sight: her skin, her flesh, her blood, even her dung, shall be burnt. And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.*
- *Then the priest... and he that burns [the heifer]... and he that gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening....*





# Ki Tisa

- **The Red Heifer**
- *This is the law: when a man dies in a tent, all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel, which has no covering bound upon it, is unclean. And whoever touches one that is slain with a sword in the open field, or a dead body, or a bone of a man or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.*
- *And they shall take for the unclean person of the ashes of the burnt purification offering, and living water shall be put upon it in a vessel. And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon [him].*
- *The clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean person on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day [the unclean person] shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at evening... [But] he that sprinkles the water of sprinkling... and he that touches the water of sprinkling shall be unclean until the evening....*

# Ki Tisa

- *Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring to you a red heifer (19:2)*
- *Nine Red Heifers were prepared from the time that the Jewish people were commanded this mitzvah until the Second Temple was destroyed. The first was prepared by Moses, the second by Ezra, and another seven were prepared from Ezra until the Temple's destruction. The tenth Heifer will be prepared by Moshiach, may he speedily be revealed, Amen, may it so be the will of G-d.*
- *(Mishneh Torah)*

# Ki Tisa

- *The Mishneh Torah is a purely legal work. As he explains in his introduction, Maimonides included only the final rulings of Torah law, leaving out the reasoning and deliberations behind them, in order to make it a readily accessible guide to daily life for all. Also in those rare cases in which Maimonides appears to "digress" and interject a philosophical insight or some background information, upon closer examination these always prove to be a statement of law and a practical instruction on daily living.*
- *The same is true of the above quoted passage. At first glance, it appears to be a brief piece of history concerning the Red Heifer, followed by a prayerful appeal to the Almighty to send Moshiach. But Maimonides is demonstrating to us the true definition of "belief in Moshiach." To believe in Moshiach is not just to believe that he will someday come, but to expect his coming on a daily, hourly, and momentary basis. It means that no matter what you are discussing, the subject turns to Moshiach at the slightest provocation. It means that in the midst of arranging the laws of the Red Heifer, a spontaneous plea erupts from the depths of your heart: "May he speedily be revealed, Amen, may it so be the will of G-d!"*
- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

# Ki Tisa

- *A red heifer (19:2)*
- A maid's child once dirtied the royal palace. Said the king: "Let his mother come and clean up her child's filth." By the same token, G-d says: "Let the Heifer atone for the deed of the Calf."
- (Midrash Tanchuma)
- *This is the law (torah): When a man who dies in a tent... (19:14)*
- Resh Lakish said: From where do we learn that words of Torah endure only in he who kills himself for it? Because it says, "This is the Torah: when a man dies in the tent..."
- (Talmud, Berachot 63b)
- *The clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean person... and he shall be clean at evening... [But] he that sprinkles the water of sprinkling... shall be unclean (19:19-21)*
- All who are involved in the preparation of the Heifer from beginning to the end, become impure, but the Heifer itself purifies the impure! But G-d says: I have made a *chok*, decreed a decree, and you may not transgress My decrees.
- (Midrash Tanchuma)

# Ki Tisa

- The fact that the ashes of the Heifer "purify the contaminated and contaminate the pure" carries an important lesson to us in our daily lives: If your fellow has been infected by impurity and corruption, do not hesitate to get involved and do everything within your power to rehabilitate him. If you are concerned that you may become tainted by your contact with him, remember that the Torah commands the Kohen to purify his fellow Jew, even though his own level of purity will be diminished in the process.
- (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

# Ki Tisa

- "An idolater once confronted Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai on the issue of the red heifer, and posed this question to him: this ritual which you Jews perform, with all these details - it all just seems like some sort of superstitious, magical rite! You bring a heifer, burn and pulverize it, and save its ashes. Then when one of you becomes impure on account of exposure to death, you sprinkle a couple of drops on him, and you say that he has become pure!"
- The great sage responded: "Have you ever in your life been possessed by an evil spirit?"  
"No," said the pagan.  
"But have you ever seen someone who was?"  
"Yes."  
"And what did they do for him?" asked the rabbi. "What treatment was administered, to relieve his condition?"

# Ki Tisa

- "Well, the roots of certain plants are gathered and brought, and these are burned underneath him. Then water is thrown upon it, and the unclean spirit leaves him."
- Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai said to him, "let your ears hear what your mouth is saying. For the verse in Zechariah 13:2 says "and also the prophets and the unclean spirit I will cause to pass from the land." We sprinkle some of the solution on him, and it departs.
- When the idolator left, the students confronted Rabban Yochanan. "Our master! You pushed him away easily by telling him a simple explanation. But what will you tell us? We want the real truth!"
- Said the great sage: "By your lives, understand this well: it is not the death which renders impure, nor the waters which cleanse - it is all the word of God. So said the Holy One, "I have engraved an ordinance with no explanation - and you cannot transgress it."



## *Final Thoughts*

**All of what we are, we see, we did and will do, is  
the Work of HaShem**

**This we celebrate fifty-two times a Year on  
Shabbat.**

**“May it be Your Will, HaShem, that the Holy  
Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days and  
grant us our share in Your Torah....”**

**Shabbat Shalom**