

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 20 Adar 5767, Parshat Parah. We read from two Sifrei Torah. We omit Av HaRachamim.

TORAH DIALOGUE (p. 352 Hz) (p. 540 S) (p. 331 Hi)
KI TISSA כִּי תִשָּׂא

1. The Torah begins today's parsha with the commandment regarding the method to be used when taking a census. When Moshe heard that Hashem wanted to count the Jewish people, he was worried. The concern Moshe had was that if 600,000 Jewish men knew that they needed to be counted, they would all rush to be first, creating much contention and rivalry; pushing and shoving one another in order to be the first to be counted. This would result in a situation where people would get hurt – truly a plague among the Jewish people. God comes and calms Moshe that he need not concern himself in this fashion. As soon as the people realize that part of the census will require the mitzvah of the giving of the money, then nobody would be rushing ahead to be first. No-one runs in order to compete with the giving of money, even a smaller sum like half a shekel. There will be no plague amongst the people, Hashem assures Moshe that clearly there will be no pushing and shoving and no running against each other in confusion to be first when it will cost them money! (The Beit HaLevi.)

2. The Vilna Gaon stated that the warning about taking a census precipitating plagues applies for all time. The Ramban and Rashi felt that there was a command here to take a census; according to the Vilna Gaon there is no census commanded here. Unlike Rashi and Ramban, the Vilna Gaon felt that there was only one census, not two. The half shekel of verse 13 was collected for the Temple sockets. There is no mitzvah for all time to give specifically a half shekel during each census, but only to conduct each census in such a way that no plague occurs. Thus when King Shaul counted the Israelites, rather than counting heads he collected lambs (Samuel I, 15:4.) or shards (ibid. 11:8). Many others felt that there was a census here and claimed that there was a census after the Golden Calf as well. Many commentators felt that the Gaon was correct and that the essence of the opening aliyah is to warn the people to take preventive measures against plague when counting the Jewish people.

3. The recipe for the incense is presented and the list of spices necessary is impressive, to say the least. One of the spices was said to have a bad aroma (the *chelb'nah*—galbanum) but when mixed with the others teaches us a lesson that we accept those of lesser quality. It is recorded that Rav Pinchas, the Ba'al Hafla'ah (19th century Frankfurt) gathered a minyan of Jews in his house. Once there were ten, Rav Pinchas commanded them to wait because he wanted one more man to come. It seems that among the ten there was one whose conduct was questionable in the eyes of the Rabbi, and the Rabbi did not really want to count him for the minyan. One of the *daveners* understood what was happening and approached the Rabbi and asked

him, "Rebbe, didn't the Torah tell us that we are required to include the *chelb'nah* in the incense as a message for us that we count somebody who is less fragrant among the quorum necessary?" "Understood," responded Rav Pinchas, "but take note that there are 11 spices required according to the Torah for the incense, so you still need 10 aromatic spices to negate the one whose conduct is questionable."

4. The bulk of the parsha deals with the sin of the Golden Calf. When punishment is meted out and the people are corrected, Moshe places the Tent of Meeting outside of the camp of Israel. This phrase of "outside the camp" appears twice in the opening verse of 33:7 along with the parallel phrase "far from the camp." The Tent is not just outside of the camp, but far from it. The result of the Tent of Meeting, the Ohel Mo'ed, and Moshe being outside the camp, is that everyone who wanted to seek Hashem had to go outside of the camp. Hashem cannot be found within the camp of Israel, rather on the outside of it. In the aftermath of the sin of the Golden Calf, and the destruction of this intimate relationship between Hashem and Israel created at Mount Sinai, Hashem has decided to lead the people indirectly rather than through direct contact. Consequently he cannot be found in the camp. Moshe and those who seek him must relocate to outside of the camp. (Rav Chanoch Waxman of Yeshivat Har Etzion.) This would bring to light why Hashem expresses himself with the construction of the Mishkan that "they will make for me a Mikdash and I will dwell among them." Perhaps what happens with the construction of the Mishkan is the ability to bring the Ohel Mo'ed from outside the camp all the way to being in the middle of the camp of Israel. The positioning of the Tent of Meeting is actually the repositioning of Hashem into the center of the Jewish universe. (RED.)

5. Why did Aharon assist the people in the making of the Golden Calf? Why wasn't he successful in attempting to dissuade them or stop them in some fashion?

6. After the debacle of the Golden Calf, Moshe asks Hashem to reveal Himself and His glory to the Jewish people in such a manner that the sin of the Golden Calf would never be repeated. The response that Hashem gives concludes with the verse (33:23) "and you will see My back but My front you shall not see." This is an enigmatic answer that is interpreted by many, including the Chatam Sofer, that a human being cannot comprehend the ways of God as they are taking place. It is only after an entire chain of events has taken place that we look back through the perspective of history and begin to appreciate the wisdom of Hashem's master plan.

I once met a religious Israeli pilot a couple of decades ago who told me that he had developed proficiency in the flying of the American-made Israeli fighter jets. He was a successful pilot in the service of the Israeli Armed Forces and explained that this verse came alive to him in what he was doing. When he was up in the air, engaged in combat with the Arab enemy, he was totally consumed with the efforts at hand in combat and could not perceive God's

intervention or participation in what he was doing. When he successfully returned to base and looked back upon his mission, he truly realized the significance that man cannot see God except in retrospect. You will see His back only. This was a very poignant explanation and I admired the pilot for his ability to take a verse of Torah and explain it in a very personal fashion in this manner. Unfortunately some years later this Israeli fell in battle against the Arab enemy. (RED.)

7. "You shall not make any cast metal idols" (34:17). The Kotzker Rebbe interpreted this verse homiletically and said: "It is forbidden to use God as a mask (the word *masseichah* means a mask or an image). This means that one may not use religion as a façade for unethical or immoral dealings. One must be totally sincere in all of his actions, and if he uses religious zeal as an excuse for improper conduct, he causes the greatest Chillul Hashem possible.

The Kotzker Rebbe's comments are germane to our society as well when people in many religions, Judaism also, use their religious zeal and extra fervor to impress the public, but unfortunately the zeal and the fervor do not penetrate their inner soul. The presence of zealots in religion poses a threat to normative understanding of what God really wants of us. He does not want an overzealousness that will mask wrong-doing. We need to be consistent, inside and outside, in everything that we do to be ethical and moral. (RED.)

MAFTIR (p. 652 Hz) (p. 898 S) (p. 584 Hi)
PARAH פרה

The special portion instructing Bnei Yisrael in the purification ritual of the red heifer was unique and wondrous. Yet, it was also important. Just as man cannot live without sin, he cannot live a totally pure life, without ever coming in contact with a human corpse. In all cases, man must strive for purity, and purity is attainable. Prior to ascending to Jerusalem to bring the Passover sacrifice, each person needed to strive for ritual purity.

HAFTORAH (p. 999 Hz) (p. 1194 S) (p. 960 Hi)
EZEKIEL יחזקאל

This week's haftorah, read in conjunction with Parshat Parah, describes the Jewish people's state of purity in the time of Mashiach. The prophet Yechezkel says in Hashem's name, "And I will sprinkle pure waters upon you which will purify you from all your impurities and repulsive actions." Yechezkel refers here to the Jewish people's ultimate perfection when Hashem will totally cleanse them from sin. The prophet compares this experience to purification from ritual impurity. It is worthwhile to focus on the particular symbolism he used. He did not compare their purification to the traditional immersion process, rather to the purifying waters of the red heifer. This detailed and mysterious procedure purified one from his direct contact with a corpse. Such contact transferred a severe state of ritual impurity which required a unique purification process. Yechezkel's symbolism suggests a direct corollary between

association with sin and association with death. Apparently, ultimate removal of any relationship to sin is similar to removal of the ritual effects of death.

SHABBAT HALACHAH

The cup used for Kiddush should be intact, i.e. without any cracks or holes. In addition, the rim must be whole, without the slightest chip or crack in it. If the base is slightly broken, the cup should not be used for Kiddush even if the base can still support the cup and the cup is otherwise undamaged. If a cup without a defect is unobtainable, a damaged one may be used as long as it holds at least a *reviit* (see below) of wine. If no cup at all is available, one may recite Kiddush over the bottle of wine. If the Kiddush cup is not clean, it must be washed. One should not use a disposable cup for Kiddush. However, if nothing else is available, such a cup may be used. (R. Moshe Feinstein writes against using such a cup.) The Kiddush cup must contain the volume of at least a *reviit* of wine. If it holds less, the Kiddush is not valid. There are many halachic opinions regarding the amount of a *reviit*. Some say 3.2 fluid ounces is sufficient. According to R. Moshe Feinstein the amount necessary for Friday night's Kiddush is 4.42 fluid ounces. (The daytime measurement of Kiddush is 3.3 fluid ounces according to R. Moshe and 3 fluid ounces according to others.)