

פָרָשַׁת כִּי תְשָׂא

Parashas Ki Sisa

פרק כ' תשא

אונקלוס

ויא ומליל יי עם משה למייר: יכ ארי
תקבל ית חשבן בני ישראל למניניהו
ויתנו גבר פרוץ נפשה קדרם יי כב
תחמי יתחוון ולא יהיו בהון מותא כב
תחמי יתחוון: יג דין יתנו כל דעבר על
מניניא פלגות סלעא בסלעוי קורשא
עסריין מעין סלעא פלגות סלעא
אפרשותא קדרם יי: יד כל דעבר על
מניניא מבר עסריין שנין ולעלא יתנו
אפרשותא קדרם יי: ט רעתיר לא יסגי
וידסבן לא ינער מפלגות סלעא למtan
ית אפרשותא קדרם יי לכפרא על
נפשתיכון: ט ותחס ית כסף כפוניא
מן בני ישראל ותנן יתמה על פלחות
משבע זמנא וייה לבני ישראל
לדרכנו קדרם יי לכפרא על נפשתיכון:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר כִּי תְשַׁא אֶת־רַאשׁ בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל לְפִקְדֵּהֶם וְנִתְּנוּ אֲישׁ כֹּפֵר נִפְשׁוּ לְיהוָה בְּפִקְדֵּן
יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה בְּהֶם גָּג בְּפִקְדֵּן אֶתְכֶם זֶה וַיְתַּנֵּן כָּל־
הַעֲבָר עַל־הַפְּקָדִים מִחְצִית הַשְׁקָל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקָּדֶשׁ
עַשְׂרִים גְּרָה הַשְׁקָל מִחְצִית הַשְׁקָל תְּרוּמָה לְיהוָה בְּלֵד
הַעֲבָר עַל־הַפְּקָדִים מִבֵּן עַשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וּמָעָלָה יִתְּן תְּרוּמָת
טו יהוָה הַעֲשֵׂר לְאַ-יְרָבָה וְהַדָּל לְאַ-יְמָעֵיט מִמִּחְצִית
הַשְׁקָל לְתַת אֶת־תְּרוּמָת יהוָה לְכֹפֵר עַל־נִפְשָׁתֵיכֶם
טו וּלְקַח תְּבָסֵף הַכְּפָרִים מִאת בָּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִתְּן תְּאֵן
עַל־עֲבָדָת אֲהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהִיא לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְזֹכְרוֹן לִפְנֵי
יהוָה לְכֹפֵר עַל־נִפְשָׁתֵיכֶם

PARASHAS KI SISA

11-16. The census. The Torah teaches that it is forbidden to count Jews in the ordinary manner, and that when it is necessary to conduct a census, it should be done by having the people contribute items, which would then be counted. In the case of the census in the Wilderness, the people, rich and poor alike, were called upon to contribute half a shekel each, for the construction and upkeep of the Tabernacle [see below]. The status of Israel is elevated by its contributions to charitable causes, and this is why they were counted by having the entire nation join in contributing to a sacred cause. This concept is indicated by the literal

meaning of the commandment in verse 12: *When you elevate the heads of the Children of Israel . . .* (*Bava Basra* 10b, *Pesikta Zutresa*), implying that the function of these contributions was not only to facilitate a census and to provide for the Tabernacle, but to raise the level of the contributors.

The equal participation of all the people symbolizes that all Jews must share in achieving the *national* goals, that everyone should *pass through the census* (v. 14) by giving up his selfish, personal interests for the sake of the nation. One who does so gains infinite benefit, because the

PARASHAS KI SISA

The Census ¹¹ **H**ASHEM spoke to Moses, saying: ¹² “When you take a census of the Children of Israel according to their numbers, every man shall give HASHEM an atonement for his soul when counting them, so that there will not be a plague among them when counting them.” ¹³ This shall *The Three Terumos* they give — everyone who passes through the census — a half shekel of the sacred shekel, the shekel is twenty geras, half a shekel as a portion to HASHEM. ¹⁴ Everyone who passes through the census, from twenty years of age and up, shall give the portion of HASHEM. ¹⁵ The wealthy shall not increase and the destitute shall not decrease from half a shekel — to give the portion of HASHEM, to atone for your souls. ¹⁶ You shall take the silver of the atonements from the Children of Israel and give it for the work of the Tent of Meeting; and it shall be a remembrance before HASHEM for the Children of Israel, to atone for your souls.”

mission of Israel is dependent on the unity of the whole (*R' Hirsch*).

The verses also speak in terms of atonement that is achieved by the participation in this half shekel assessment. There is great power in the unity of a nation striving toward a common goal. When everyone joins in a constructive cause, the spiritual merits of all the individuals become merged, as it were, so that not only their funds, but their personal attainments come together to assist one another [see *Avos* 2:2]. A solitary human being can seldom survive Divine scrutiny; what person is free of sins and shortcomings? But when a nation becomes one, it ascends to a higher plane, because all its individual members merge their virtues with one another. As a result, the national collective is judged far more benevolently. [*Kuzari* explains that this is also why it so important to pray with a quorum, rather than individually.] This is why the Shunamite woman (*II Kings* 4:13) who displayed extraordinary kindness to the prophet Elisha refused his offer to pray for her or intercede with the authorities on her behalf. She explained that if she were singled out, she would be judged more strictly in the heavenly scales, especially since, as the *Zohar* teaches, that incident took place on Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment (*R' Bachya*).

¶ The three terumos.

The word *terumah*, or *portion*, is mentioned three times in the passage (vs. 13,14,15), from which the Sages derive that there were three separate gifts of silver (*Yerushalmi Shekalim* 1:1, *Megillah* 29b). Two of them were required gifts of a half shekel each, and the third was a voluntary contribution of any amount of silver. The two compulsory gifts were an annual contribution to cover the cost of all communal Temple offerings, and a one-time contribution of silver for the sockets upon which the walls of the Tabernacle rested (26:19). The voluntary gift was part of the general contributions for the construction of the Tabernacle and its utensils (*Rashi*).

The compulsory gifts are further illustrations of the theme discussed above: *Everyone*, whatever his social or economic status, had to be an equal partner in the Tabernacle that existed to bring together God and His people, and in the offerings that represented the nation in achieving that paramount goal (*R' Hirsch*).

The annual half shekel gift to pay for the communal offerings were collected during the month of Adar, so that the funds would be ready in time for the month of Nissan. Consequently, this chapter was read in synagogues the Sabbath before Rosh Chodesh Adar, a practice that is still followed in commemoration of the Torah's commandment to participate in the offerings. In further commemoration of this commandment, on Purim, which falls in Adar, it is customary to contribute half of one's host country's standard coin to a communal charity, as an expression of the concept that everyone has an equal responsibility to participate in meeting the community's needs.

12. בְּפָקַד אֹתָם — *When counting them*. This phrase is repeated twice in the verse, to teach that this manner of counting was decreed not only for Moses' census, but that it is forbidden for all time to make a head-count of Jews (*Or HaChaim*). King David erred in this regard, thinking that this passage applied only to Moses' time (*Berachos* 62b). He violated this prohibition by ordering a regular head-count, a sin for which the nation was struck by a plague (*II Samuel* 24:1-15), and for which he repented (*I Chronicles* 21:8) when he realized his error (*Ramban*). Another interpretation of David's sin is that it is inconceivable that so great a scholar could have erred in the interpretation of a Scriptural passage. He did indeed use coins or some other method to avoid a direct count, but he was punished because he did not have a compelling reason to conduct any sort of census, and therefore he should not have conducted it, no matter what the method (*Ramban, Numbers* 1:3).

13. הִנֵּה יְתַתֶּן — *This shall they give*. God showed Moses a coin of fire and said to him, “Like this shall they give” (*Tanchuma; Rashi*). The commentators find homiletic insights in this Midrash. Among them are:

— God showed Moses that money is like fire. Both can be either beneficial or destructive, depending on how they are used (*Noam Elimelech*).

— If one seeks atonement through giving funds for charity, the good deed should be done with fire and enthusiasm (*R' Mendel of Kotzk*).

לְמַחְנֵית הַשְׁקֵל — *A half shekel*. The shekel was a specific weight of silver that Moses instituted as the standard coinage. The verse goes on to specify that a full shekel

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֲלֵي-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: וְעִשֵּׂית בְּיוֹם נְחִשָּׁת וּבְנְכוֹנָה
נְחִשָּׁת לְרֹחֶצֶת וְגַתְתָּ אֶתְךָ בֵּין-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּבֵין הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
ט וְגַתְתָּ שֶׁמֶה מִים: וַיֹּרֶחֶוּ אֶחָדוּ וּבְנֵיו מִמְּנָנוּ אֶת-יְדֵיכֶם
כ וְאֶת-רְגֵלֵיכֶם: בְּבָאֵם אֲלֵא-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד יְרֹחֶצֶת-מִים וְלֹא
יִמְתֹּה אָוֹ בְּגַשְׁתָּם אֲלֵהֶל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְשִׁרת לְהַקְטִיר אֲשֶׁר
כָּל-יְהוָה: וַיֹּרֶחֶוּ יְדֵיכֶם וְרְגֵלֵיכֶם וְלֹא יִמְתֹּה וְהִיְתָה לָהֶם
חַק-עוֹלָם לוֹ וְלֹזְרוּן לְדַרְתֶּם:
בְּכֹכֶג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֲלֵי-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: וְאַתָּה קְח-לְךָ בְּשָׁמִים
רָאשׁ מְרַדּוֹל חַמְשׁ מֵאוֹת וּקְנָפְן-בְּשָׁם מִחְצִיתוֹ
כְּחַמְשִׁים וּמִאַתִּים וּקְנָה-בְּשָׁם חַמְשִׁים וּמִאַתִּים: וּקְדֻה
כָּה חַמְשׁ מֵאוֹת בְּשֶׁקֵּל הַקְדֵּשׁ וּשְׁמָנִין זִית הַיּוֹן: וְעִשֵּׂית אֶת-
שְׁמָנִין מִשְׁחָת-קְדֵשׁ רַקֵּח מִרְקָחָת מִשְׁמָה רַקֵּח שְׁמָנִין
כו מִשְׁחָת-קְדֵשׁ יְהִיָּה: וּמִשְׁחָת בּוֹ אֶת-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת-
אָרוֹן הַעֲדָת: וְאֶת-הַשְּׁלֹחַן וְאֶת-כְּפָלָ-כְּפָלָיו וְאֶת-הַמְנָרָה

בענין, אך ה'ולך' לומר קגןן צבס, מן כתוב: מוחץתו חמשים ומאותים. מה'ולך' בצלת' ספה חמץ' ומלהקיס', נמל'ה כלו חמץ' כמו שיטרו מל' דרכו. ה'ולך' גם מלהר' מלהר' זו וה'ולך' נורה הכתיב ר' היל' להצ'ו' לו לאח'ון, לארכות' זו ג' 'הכרטנו', דה'ן זקוקין עניין צבאי'. וכן צבאי' בכלויות' (ג'): וכן בושם. קינה צל' צבס. לפ' צי'ם קנים צל'ין צבאל צבס ה'ולך' לומו: ובל' צבאי' חמשים ומאותים. סך מסקל' כולם: (בד) וקדחה. סך צבאי' עצם, ובכללן חכמים קי'יטה' (מעשרות כב': כרויות כב':) והן: ה'ולך' לוגוני. והלא כן גם חכמי' יתכל'ב. ר' מה'יל' ה'ולך' צל'ון אה' טתקין. ה'ולך' לו 'ז' אודה' ואלה' נסוך אה' טתקין' ה'ו' שיפק. ה'ולך' של'וט'ם צמיס' צל' י'צ'ל'ו' אה' השם' ז' וה'ולך' ה'ו' ג' טליה' צבאי' עד' סק'לט' קרית, וקפקחו' לדען מעל' טתקין' (כרויות כב': סוריה' י'ה': (ב'ה) ר'ך' מה'ולך' ר'ך' דבר' סוק', וגטפם' מוליה', צאחו' נטמלה. ור' סוק' כמו ר'ך' מה'ולך' ר'ך' קלים' (ב'ה':) געט' (נסוכן' נגש). וה'ו' כמו ר'גער' סוק' (יעט'ים' ה'ל' עטו') וכמו ר'וקע' ה'ולך' (קס מ'ב:) צקטטעס' למיטא'. וכל' דבר' גאנטוו'ך' צה'ל'ו' מעד' דרא' קויפ' מזוזה' ה'ו' ר'יה' ה'ו' טענס' קדר' מרכק'ה: ר'ך' מה'ולך' צה'ל'ו' מעד' דרא' קויפ' גאנטוו'ך' (ב'ו) ומשחת' בו. כל' ר'וכע' גאנטוו'ך' אס' ה'ו' פטמר'ז'ו'ה: מעשה ר'ך'ה. צס' צה'ל'ו' דרכ'ב: (ב'ו) ומשחת' בו.

consisted of twenty gerah. A gerah was a coin that, in Talmudic Aramaic, was known as a *ma'ah* (*Onkelos*). In contemporary weights, *Chazon Ish* (*Yoreh De'ah* 182:19) calculates a shekel of the Torah as 16 grams, or .51 troy ounces, of pure silver. This follows the halachically accepted view of *Rambam* and the *Geonim*. According to *Rashi* and *Ramban*, however, the shekel of the Torah is 13.33 grams, or .43 troy ounces (*Sheurin shel Torah*). It should be noted, however, that in the time of the Second Temple, the silver content of the shekel was increased to 24 gerah [see Appendix 1 to ArtScroll Mishnah Shekalim].

Many commentators interpret homiletically that the requirement of *half* a coin alludes to the concept that no Jew is complete unless he joins with others; as long as we are in isolation, each of us is only "half" of our full potential.

(יח) ביר. כמוון דוד גולדה ולה דDIS סמירקיס צפיאס מיס: ובנו. כתלרגמו, וצפסיה. מושב מסוקן לכיום: לרוחזה. מושב געל הילובזה. מזחצ'ה צפיאסיה. סטטוטו צו צוותה ליפוי פאה משכנן היל מונד. וסיה הקור מושק קמעה וטעוד נאכל. צפיאסיה צפיאסיה מושק מונד. מושק צפיאסיה מושק קמעה וטעוד נאכל. מזחצ'ה נאכל. קבין צמזה'ה וממקנן ולוינו מפקיך כלל צנאנטיס, מושק צנאלמו היל מה מזחצ'ה נאכל. מושק ממקנן היל מונד (לטאן מנטן), אקלומבו, מזחצ'ה ליפוי היל מונד ולוין צפיאסיה צפיאסיה מושק מונד. מושק צנאנטיס כלפ' עדרכס. כך צנאנטיס צזקמיס (גע): צויר ניפוי היל מונד, טה כילד, מושק קמעה צלפ' עדרכס. וכך צנאנטיס צזקמיס (גע): (יט) את זידיהם את רגלהיהם. צבם חחת ליש מתקד' יוי' ורגליין. וכך צנאנטיס צזקמיס (גע), כילד קדוז ליס ורגלייס, מיניכ' יוי' קימיניא טול גב' רגלו קימיניא ויז' צצמלהיות טול גב' רגלו צצמלהיות ומוקדץן: (כ) בבודואם אל אהל מונד. לאקטיין שחירות ובן עטרכיס קעטרא, הוי להזם מס פר כהן סמץ'יך וסמע'יך טעוזה וכוכביס (קס): ולא יזוהו. טה היל ויהי' יזוהו, סטטוטה למלה כללות, וככלל היל היל שומט' קב': אל המזבח. מהיון, טה היל ציילוק היל מונד חילן צחאי: (בא) ולא ימTHON. ליעז' מיסה טול סטטוטה צמזה'ה ולוינו דרווין ליס ורגלייס, סטטוטה קרלה'טונה היל צממעו היל נל סטטוטה: (כג) בשמיים ראש. חוצ'ט'ים: וקונמן בשם. פ' סטטוטה נל סטטוטה: (ה) סטטוטה מונד וטעוד, וס' צו ראי מונד וטעוד, וס' סטטוטה היל.

17-21. בְּרִיר / פָּרִיר / The Laver. In the Courtyard of the Tabernacle stood a large, copper water-filled utensil from which the Kohanim were required to wash their hands and feet before performing the service. It was like a cauldron or basin that was set upon a copper base, and it had two spouts at the bottom, through which the water would flow (*Rashi*).

The purpose of this washing was for sanctity, rather than cleanliness; indeed, *Onkelos* renders the word לְחַזֵּחַ — literally *for washing* (v. 18) — as לְקָדֵשׁ, *for sanctification*. The hands and feet represent the upper and lower extremities of the human body, and by sanctifying them, the servants of God symbolize their total devotion to the service they are about to perform. For the same reason, the Sages instituted that Jews should wash their hands before prayer (*Ramban*).

The Laver ¹⁷ HASHEM spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁸ “You shall make a copper Laver and its base of copper, for washing; place it between the Tent of Meeting and the Altar, and put water there.

¹⁹ From it, Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands together with their feet. ²⁰ Whenever they come to the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water and not die, or when they approach the Altar to serve, to raise up in smoke a fire-offering to HASHEM. ²¹ They shall wash their hands and feet and not die. It shall be for them an eternal decree, for him and his offspring for their generations.”

Anointment Oil ²² HASHEM spoke to Moses, saying: ²³ “Now you, take for yourself choice spices: five hundred shekel-weights of pure myrrh; fragrant cinnamon, half of which shall be two hundred fifty; two hundred fifty of fragrant cane; ²⁴ five hundred of cassia — in the sacred shekel-weight, and a hin of olive oil. ²⁵ Of it you shall make oil of sacred anointment, a blended compound, the handiwork of a perfumer; it shall remain oil of sacred anointment. ²⁶ With it you shall anoint the Tent of Meeting and the Ark of Testimonial-tablets; ²⁷ the Table and all its utensils, the Menorah

The Laver [Kiyor] is not mentioned with the other utensils in the previous chapters because its function was different from theirs. The other parts and vessels caused the Divine Presence to rest on the Tabernacle, whereas the Laver served to prepare the Kohanim to carry out their mission (*Siforno*).

19. וְאַתָּה רְגֹלִים — *Together with their feet.* The conjunction וְאַתָּה indicates that the hands and feet must be washed at the same time (*Or HaChaim*). Consequently, the Kohen places his right hand on his right foot and washes them, and then follows the same procedure with his left hand and foot (*Rashi* from *Zevachim* 19b). This symbolizes the idea that the proper service of God requires that all of man's faculties be directed toward the same goal. Thus, the highest part of the body — i.e., the hands, because they can be raised upward — and the lowest part of the body, the feet, must be sanctified equally and simultaneously.

20. וְלَا יָמֻתוּ — *And not die.* The Torah does not say directly that transgressors *will* die, because that would imply that the death would take place immediately. This is not the case, however, because a heavenly death penalty is weighed in God's scales and it is He Who decides whether and when to impose it or defer it. A human court, however, is totally different. Where the Torah requires that it administer a punishment, it has no discretion to delay or commute (*Gur Aryeh*).

22-33. שֶׁמֶן קָדְשָׁה / Anointment oil. Moses was commanded to compound a mixture of oil and spices that would be used to anoint and consecrate all the vessels of the Tabernacle, and also Aaron and his sons, for their tasks. In the future, this same oil would be used to anoint the kings of the Davidic dynasty and Kohanim Gedolim, until the waning days of the First Temple.

The manufacture of the anointment oil was unique among the needs of the Tabernacle, in that it had to be made by Moses himself (*Or HaChaim*). Since its function was to achieve a high degree of dedication to God's will, it is understandable that the oil should be made by Moses, the instrument of that will. Indeed, this first supply of oil made

by Moses was the only anointment oil ever used, and its whereabouts will be revealed again with the coming of Messiah. It is forbidden to manufacture an exact duplicate of this oil or to use either the original or a copy for one's own purposes (v. 33), for it would be a desecration of God's will, as if this formulation could be used with impunity by anyone at will (*R' Hirsch*).

It should be noted that the exact translation of all the spices in this and the next passages is not definitely known.

23. וְאַתָּה קָח־לְךָ — *Now you, take for yourself.* Of all the artifacts of the Tabernacle, only regarding the anointment oil does God tell Moses, “Now you.” This indicates that, although spices are listed among those that were to be contributed for the Tabernacle (25:6), Moses himself was to contribute and mix those that were needed for the anointment oil (*Or HaChaim*).

24. הַיּוֹן — *Hin.* A hin is at minimum just under a gallon. According to some opinions, it is almost two gallons.

25. שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחָה־קָדֵשׁ — *Oil of sacred anointment.* The word קָדֵשׁ is used to denote two concepts: (a) Separation. Thus, God is called holy in the sense that He is so superior to all else that He is totally separated from them. This concept is symbolized by the olive oil, for it does not mix with other liquids. At the other end of the spectrum, a prostitute is called a *kedeishah* because she is removed from the concept of human decency. (b) The term קָדֵשׁ also implies the positive idea of total devotion to a higher purpose. The anointment process combined both of these ideas: The Kohanim and the Tabernacle were withdrawn from mundane existence and dedicated to the service of God (*R' Hirsch*).

מן-הא וית' מרב' ח' דקטרא בוסטמיא: כה חווית מרבח דעלטה וית' כל
מנוחה וית' בירוא וית' בסיסיה; טוטתקראש יתחנן קדרשא כל דיקרב
יבחון ותתקרש: לנט אהוּן וית' בנוּהי תתרבוי ותקדש ניתחנן לשמשא קדרמי:
לא עס בני ישראל תמלל למימר משה
רבנות קדרשא יהי דין קדרם לדרכיכון:
לבד על בסרא ראנשא לא יתנפֶק
ויברגמוּתָה לא מעברון בונחה קדרשא
הוא קדרשא יהי לכון: לגבר די יבسم
דכונתָה ודי יתמן מנה על חולני וישתazzi
מעמיה: לדנאמר יי' למשה סב לך
bosmeyn נטוֹפָא וטוֹפְרָא וחלבגנטא
bosmeyn ולכונתא דכיתא מתקל במתקל
יהי: לה ותעדך יתה קטרת bosmeyn בסם
עובד bosmeyn מערב דבי קדרשא:
לו ותשוחוק מנה ותדייך ותמן מנה קדרם
סחדותא במשבען ומנא די אומן מימרי
לך תפון קדרש קדרשא תהי לכון:
לו וקטרת bosmeyn די תעבור בדמאותה לא
תעבורון לכון קדרשא תהי לך קדרם יי'
לח גבר דיעבד דכונתא לארכא בה
וישתazzi מעמה: אומיליל יי' עם משה
למימר: ב' חוי דרב' חייט בשום בצלאל בר
אורוי בר חור לשבטא ריחודה:
ונואשלמית עמה רוח מון קדרם יי'

בְּכָל־בָּلִיָּה וְאַתָּה מִזְבֵּחַ הַקְטָרָת: וְאַתָּה מִזְבֵּחַ הַעֲלָה וְאַתָּה
כָּל־בָּלִיָּה וְאַתָּה חַפֵּיר וְאַתָּה בְּנָה: וְקִדְשָׁת אֶתְם וְהִיוּ קָדְשָׁ
לְקָדְשִׁים בְּלִיחְמָגָע בָּהָם יִקְרַבְשׁ: וְאַתָּה אַהֲרֹן וְאַתָּה בְּנֵי
לְאַתָּה תִּמְשַׁח וְקִדְשָׁת אֶתְם לְכָהּ לֵי: וְאַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּדַבֵּר
לְכָל־אָמֵר שֶׁמְנֻן מְשִׁיחַ-קָדֵש יְהִי וְהִיא לִי לְדֹרְתֵיכֶם: עַל־
בָּשָׂר אָדָם לֹא יִסְךְ וּבְמִתְבָּנָתוֹ לֹא תַּעֲשֶׂו בָּמָה הוּא קָדֵש
לְגֹאֵל קָדֵש יְהִי לְכֶם: אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יַרְקַח כִּמְהוּ וְאֲשֶׁר יַתְנוּ
לְדֹמְמוֹן עַל־זָר וּנְבָרָת מַעֲמִים: וַיֹּאמֶר
יְהוָה אֱלֹמֶד קָח־לְךָ סְמִים גָּטָף וְשָׁחָלָת וְחַלְבָנָה
לְה סְמִים וּלְבָנָה זָבָה בְּדָר בְּדָר יְהִי וְעַשְׂיוֹת אַתָּה
לְקַטָּרָת רְקֵח מְעָשָׂה רֹקֵם מִמְלָח טְהוֹר קָדֵש: וְשַׁחַקְתָּ
מִמְנָה הַדָּק וּנְתַתָּה מִמְנָה לִפְנֵי הַעֲדָת בְּאַחֲלָה
מוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר אָנָׁעָד לְכָ שָׁמָה קָדֵש קָדְשִׁים תְּהִיה
לְכֶם: וּבְקַטָּרָת אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה בְּמִתְבָּנָתָה לֹא תַּעֲשֶׂו לְכֶם
לְה קָדֵש תְּהִיה לְכָ לְיהוָה: אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִעֲשֶׂה כִּמְהָה לְהַרְיחָ
אֲבָה וּנְבָרָת מַעֲמִים: וַיַּדְבֵּר יְהֹוָה
בְּאֱלֹמֶד לְאָמֵר: רָאָה קָרָאתִי בְּשָׁם בְּצַלָּאֵל בָּנִי־אוֹרִי
בָּנִי־חוֹר לְמִטָּה יְהֹוָה: וְאַמְלָא אֶתְנוּ רוח אלְהִים

ל

(בט) וקדשתם אתם. מזיחת זו מוקדמת ליפוי קדש קדשים. ומה טין קדושיםם, כל גונגנו וגוי, כל קדמי' גולני ברקה ממכנכם לתוכו קדש קדשות גנו לפכסל צויה ולינס וצגול יוס, והיו נפדים נולדה מהולין, אבל דבך צהילו רהוי לפסס חיון מקדשין. ובנונה ריהה מטבח צלמיה לל מזח, מטורן צנעל' כל גונגנו חמוץ קידש (טעלל כתוב: צומת חיין צין לרהי' בון צהילו רהוי, פ' ג' בגדים, מה בגדים לרהי' יוס' ק' כל לרהי' יוס' (זחיתם פג), כל מצחית מטבח וככניות ומכלים מטבחים לבון דבוי, פ' צהילו יוס' מטבחן הלו לגדולה, כי כן ייך וכלך צה חוך גודלון, וכבל מטבח, כמו רקיון מטבחין (פס פסוק ז) ולחיטת צמנים יממחו (עמו ונו, פ' הילמים בון כל' עבדריה: לא) לדורותיכם. מכלון מהדו רצוחין לומר צכלו קיים' לטמיד נבל, זה צגיטיריה מהיר לוגון קו (קוריות יה': לב) לא יוסך. צאי יוד' (פ' לה יפעל, כמו ממען טיבך ד' (בדים הביאו): עלبشر אדם לא יוסך. מן סענון זהה מענות: ובਮתנהתו לא העשו במזהו. כסacos סממנינו לה' חען'ו חאר כמוש' צמתקל סממןין תלנו לפ' מדת סין צמען, אבל לה' פחת זו רצח סממןין וללו לפ' חצבון ולפ' מדת צין צמען מוכך. וו' סטמי' צמתקוכו' כל' וזה להן רק' ממען חיין' הלו סרכוקחו (כליקותה: כ): ובמתנהתו. לבון חצבון, כמו מטבחנו הלהנדים (טעלל: ח) וכן צמתקכינה (לפסון פסוק ז) כל קטרותיכ: (לג) ואשר יתין מוננו. מלחו'ו כל מטבח צמתקותה (ה: כ): על זר. צהילו יוס' מטבח ומולכות (פס ו') (לד) נטף. סוח' גרי'. וועל צהילו הלו לצרכ' גוטר' ממען' קטרוף קרי' נטף (פס ו') וצלען' גומ' ה' וואהלי' קורי' לו טרי'יק' (ה: כ): וshallת. זורץ צס' חלק ומוליכ' גלפוני', ובלבון סמאנס קרי' פולוכן (פס). וזאו צמרגס הילוקום וטופריה: וחלבנה. צס' צק'י'ו רע' וקורי' גו' לו גלכ'ה'

29. — וְהִי קָדֵשׁ קָדָשִׁים — And they shall remain holy of holies. The degree of the vessels' holiness is such that, as the verse continues, whatever touches them becomes sanctified. This

means that if a sacred utensil is filled with a substance that would normally be placed in that vessel as part of the Tabernacle procedure — such as oil or flour that were placed in

and its utensils, and the Incense Altar; ²⁸ the Elevation-offering Altar and all its utensils; and the Laver and its base. ²⁹ You shall sanctify them and they shall remain holy of holies; whatever touches them shall become holy.

³⁰ “*You shall anoint Aaron and his sons and sanctify them to minister to Me.*

³¹ “*You shall speak to the Children of Israel, saying: ‘This shall remain for Me oil of sacred anointment for your generations. ³² It shall not be smeared on human flesh and you shall not duplicate it in its formulation; it is holy, it shall remain holy for you. ³³ Anyone who shall compound its like or who shall put it upon an alien shall be cut off from his people.’ ”*

Incense ³⁴ HASHEM said to Moses: “Take for yourself spices — stacte, onycha and galbanum — spices and pure frankincense: these shall all be of equal weight. ³⁵ You shall make it into a spice-compound, the handiwork of a perfumer, thoroughly mixed, pure and holy. ³⁶ You shall grind some of it finely and place some of it before the Testimonial-tablets in the Tent of Meeting, where I shall designate a time to meet you; it shall remain holy of holies to you. ³⁷ The incense that you shall make — in its proportion you shall not make for yourselves; it shall remain holy to you, for HASHEM. ³⁸ Whoever makes its like to smell it shall be cut off from his people.”

31 ¹**H**ASHEM spoke to Moses, saying: ² “See, I have called by a name, Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³ I have filled him with a Godly spirit, with

vessels used for the preparation of a meal-offering — the substance gets the status of sacrificial holiness. However, if an object is not eligible for holiness — for example, pebbles were placed in the vessels of a meal-offering — they would not become holy (*Rashi*).

31. לְשֵׁם מִשְׁחָתָךְ . . . — *For Me oil of sacred anointment.* Rather than saying that the oil would be in the custody of the Kohanim, the verse stresses that the oil is God’s — *for Me* — because the oil is being preserved by Him to anoint the king Messiah, when he arrives. The next two verses prohibit the use of the anointment oil on people other than Kohanim and kings whose anointment is required by the Torah (*Ramban*).

לֹא יַחֲזִיק בְּשָׁמֶן — This shall remain for Me, i.e., Moses’ oil will remain intact forever, so that no other oil need ever be made (*Rashi; Sforno*).

32-33. These two verses contain several prohibitions and punishments. It is forbidden under pain of *kareis*, or spiritual excision, for anyone to use Moses’ oil on himself or anyone else. It is also forbidden even to make an exact replica of Moses’ formula, and one who does so is liable to *kareis*. The latter prohibition applies only to its manufacture; once it has been made, however, it is not forbidden to use it. Furthermore, it is permitted to use the same spices in different proportions than those given in this passage (*Rashi*).

34-38. קְטֻרָה / Incense. The Sages derive exegetically that there were eleven ingredients in the incense. It was offered twice a day, morning and afternoon, on the Golden Altar, inside the Tabernacle. The fragrance of the incense represented Israel’s responsibility and desire to serve God in a manner pleasing to Him. One of the spices listed here, *galbanum*, had a foul aroma, from which the Sages (*Kereisos* 6b) derive that sinners should be included with the commu-

nity in its prayers (*Rashi*). Thus, the incense expresses the idea of Jewish unity, that everyone — the righteous and the sinner — has a share in the service of God.

36. לְפָנֵי קְעֻרָת — *Before the Testimonial-tablets.* The incense was to be burned twice daily on the Inner Altar of the Tabernacle, directly in front of the chamber that housed the Ark. The Tabernacle was known as the *Tent of Meeting*, because it was designated as the place where God “met” with Moses (*Rashi*). Alternatively, the verse also alludes to the Yom Kippur service, during which the Kohen Gadol would bring incense directly into the Holy of Holies, in front of the Ark (*Ramban*).

31.

1-11. The designation of Bezalel. The instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle having been given, God now designated Bezalel, who was only thirteen years old at this time (*Sanhedrin* 69b), to supervise the construction. That he could have mastered the wide array of crafts needed to build the Tabernacle was remarkable, if not miraculous, for the backbreaking labor to which Israel had been subjected in Egypt was hardly conducive to the development of such skills. Moreover, Bezalel had a *Godly spirit, wisdom, and insight* (v. 3). In designating him, God said, *See, I have proclaimed*, for the miracle of a future Bezalel had been “proclaimed” from the days of Adam (see *Ramban, R’ Bachya*). Thus, God showed Israel that He had not merely redeemed them from slavery, He had endowed them with the capacity to serve Him beyond their ordinary human potential. If they showed their desire to do His will, He would respond by giving them the ability and the human resources to do so.

The Sages expounded that Bezalel knew the art of combining the sacred letters with which heaven and earth were created, and that he possessed a degree of wisdom similar to that with which God created the universe

יב-יג ניאמר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: ואותה דבר אל-בני יישראלי לאמר לך את-שבתו תשמרו بي' אותן הוי ביני וביניכם לדרךיכם לדעת כי אני יהוה מקדשכם: יד ישמרתם את-השבת כי קדש הוא לכם מחלליה מות יומת כי כל-העשה בה מלאכה ונכרצה הנפש השו והוא מקרב עמיך: ששת ימים יעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי שבת שבחון קדש ליהוה כל-העשה מלאכה

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בז'וזי דמוטה, ווין לו למיין צמקרלה. ווינו הומר זאואו לאונן ערמי כתרגנוס צטראט צמאלטער (טיטל ציטט) ומרגנס צל מיכדר (קס 7) צשיי הלאוגיס צמאניה, נסוציאיס נקז'יס קז'יס, נלאנץ' צלאט'': (יא) ואאת קטרותה הסמיים לקדש. נזוך רקטוטה נזוכן צפתקאנען גאנזיל האו קך: (יג) ואאתה דבר אל בני ישראאל. ואלה, היל' צפתקאנען גאנזיל האו קך: (יג) ואאתה דבר אל בני ישראאל, נזוכן, אל קיל צפיעיך לדחוותה הא אצטמ מפני יהודא מליחאה: נזוווט טעל מליחאה מזוכן, אל קיל צפיעיך לדחוותה הא אצטמ מפני יהודא מליחאה: נזוכן את שבתותוי תשמורו. קיל געל פ' סטהיין דופחן וחריין צורייזס קמליהה, אצטט צפטעט אל מלחאה מפניה. כל חיין וווקון מעווען ווירוצלמי זרכוסט טזון; ר' ד' יז: (ה) למעת אצטט צפטעט ממליכת אצטקן: כי אאות היאו בני וביניהם. יהודא גודלה קיל צייניע צבצבצ בז'וזי דמאלטער נסס, צאנקיל'ו נסס אה יוס מנוחתי מונוחה לדעת. יהומוה צה כי אני ח' מוקדשכטם: (יד) מות ט מדיס וטאכליה: וגנברטה. צלע טארטס מליכלהה: מחלליה. טויג צה צול קזוקטאה: (טו) שבת שבתון. מוחת מונגען וויל' מנוקט ערליך: [שבת שבתון]. נאך כפלו קסטוט גומער טאטלס צול מליחאה הפי' חולן נפק, ווין יוס' צ' צהלהר צו צבצ בעטונג קיל נסס וויקלה נגנ'צ'ו: (טז) טסור צכל מליחאה. הצל יוס טויז גען גה' מלהר צו צ' צויס קעלטונן צפטען בס פסוק לט': וויזים קצמיין צפטען להויסים צכל מליחאה מעודה מומקלרים צמאלטער חוכל נסס: קדרש לה'. סמיליין קזוקטאה נצמי' וטמלועין:

3. בְּחִכָּה וּבְתַבּוֹנָה וּבְרָעַת — *With wisdom, insight, and knowledge.* *Wisdom* consists of the knowledge one acquires from others; *insight* is the derivation of new ideas and deductions from one's wisdom; and *knowledge* [in the context of building the Tabernacle] is Divine inspiration [רוּחַ נָקָרֶשׁ] (*Rashi*).

(*Berachos* 55a). This shows that the Tabernacle, as a setting for God's service and an abode for His Presence, was equivalent to the Creation of the universe. Indeed, *Ramban* and others show that the Tabernacle was the universe in micro-cosm, and its components symbolized the major elements of Creation.

Designation of Bezalel and Oholiab wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft; ⁴ to weave designs, to work with gold, silver, and copper; ⁵ stone-cutting for setting, and wood-carving — to perform every craft.

6 “And I, behold, I have assigned with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan, and I have endowed the heart of every wise-hearted person with wisdom, and they shall make all that I have commanded you: ⁷ the Tent of Meeting, the Ark of the Testimonial-tablets and the Cover that is upon it, and all the utensils of the Tent; ⁸ the Table and its utensils, the pure Menorah and all its utensils, and the Incense Altar; ⁹ the Elevation-offering Altar and all its utensils, the Laver and its base; ¹⁰ the knit vestments, the sacred vestments of Aaron the Kohen and the vestments of his sons, to minister; ¹¹ the anointment oil and the incense-spices of the Sanctuary. Like everything that I have commanded you shall they make.”

The Sabbath ¹² HASHEM said to Moses, saying: ¹³ “Now you, speak to the Children of Israel, saying: ‘However, you must observe My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I am HASHEM, Who makes you holy. ¹⁴ You shall observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you; its desecrators shall be put to death, for whoever does work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among its people. ¹⁵ For six days work may be done and the seventh day is a day of complete rest, it is sacred to HASHEM; whoever does work

10. בגדים השרדים — *The knit vestments.* According to Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Rashbam, these are the large cloths that were used to cover the vessels of the Tabernacle while it was being transported from place to place (see Numbers 4:8). Ramban renders this term as *vestments of uniqueness*, referring to the vestments of the Kohen Gadol, which the verse then goes on to define as the vestments of Aaron, in tribute to him and his successors. These vestments were singled out because only one man in every generation was permitted to wear them.

12-17. The Sabbath. Although the commandment of the Sabbath was part of the Ten Commandments (20:8), it is repeated here to caution the nation that the construction of the Sanctuary does not override the Sabbath; Israel must observe the Sabbath even while it is fashioning the resting place of God's glory. This emphatically contradicts those who claim that the laws of the Sabbath must be pliable enough to be relaxed for "valid spiritual considerations."

R' Bachya explains that "the Sabbath is the principle of faith and it is equivalent to all of the commandments, for through the commandment of the Sabbath one expresses his belief in the creation of the world, that it was created in six days and He rested on the seventh. The Sages expound that Jerusalem was destroyed only because they desecrated the Sabbath . . . and that if Israel would but observe two Sabbaths, they would be redeemed immediately."

13. אך — *However.* In the plain sense, the word *however* means to say that despite its importance, the work of the Tabernacle may not be done on the Sabbath (Rashi).

The Sages teach that the word **אך** always indicates an exception to the principle previously enunciated. In this verse, it is a limitation on the rule of Sabbath observance, indicating that there are times when it is *required* that labor be performed. Instances of such exceptions are to save a life and to perform a circumcision on the eighth day after birth (Ramban). As a reason for the requirement to save a life on

the Sabbath even at the cost of violating it, the Sages argue that it is better to transgress one Sabbath so that one may live and observe many Sabbaths (Yoma 85b). Or HaChaim reads this logic into our verse: *However — this is the exception to Sabbath observance — so that you shall observe My Sabbaths*, in the plural.

שְׁבָתִתִי — *My Sabbaths.* In the simple sense, the plural refers to all of the Sabbaths of the year. In the deeper sense, it refers to the two aspects of the Sabbath: זיכור ושמור, *Remember*, which refers to the positive commandment to honor the Sabbath; and *Observe*, which refers to the negative commandment not to desecrate the day. These twin themes are then developed. *It is a sign between Me and you* in the positive sense that Israel will honor the Sabbath, and *You shall observe the Sabbath* and those who desecrate it are liable to death (v. 14), in the negative sense of not desecrating it (Ramban).

14. מוות יי'פוחת ויברחתה — *Shall be put to death . . . shall be cut off.* These are two different, mutually exclusive penalties. One who violates the Sabbath despite a warning from witnesses that he is committing a capital offense is liable to the death penalty imposed by the court. But one who does so intentionally, without being warned or witnessed, is punished by God with *kareis*, i.e., his soul is cut off from the nation (Rashi).

Sforno explains that this verse gives the reasons that the Tabernacle may not be built on the Sabbath. To rest on it is too important to justify such labor, for one who desecrates the Sabbath is unworthy of having a Sanctuary for God's Presence.

15. שְׁבָתֶת שְׁבָתָז — *A day of complete rest.* It is not enough to refrain only from halachically prohibited activities. One must rest completely, so that he will be free for sacred activities in honor of His Creator. It is because the Sabbath is *sacred to HASHEM* that one who desecrates it is worthy of the death penalty (Sforno).

ביוומא רשבתא אתקטלא יתקטל
טו. וויטרין בני ישראל ית שבתא למועד
ית שבתא לריהון קום עולם: בין
מיימרי ובין בני ישראל אה הייא לעלם
ארוי שבתא יומין עבר יי' ית שמיא וית
ארעה וכיוומא שבעאה שבת ונוח:
יח. ויהיב למשה פד שיצי למילא עמה
בטורא דסיני תירין ליחי סדורותא לוחז
אבניא כתיבין באכבעא דיב': אונזא
עמא ארוי אוחר משה למחת מן טורא

טו בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁבָת מֹות יוֹמָת: וְשִׁמְרוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-הַשְׁבָת
ט' לְעֹשֹׂת אֶת-הַשְׁבָת לְדָרְתָם בְּרִית עֲזָלָם: בֵּין וּבֵין
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָזֶת הוּא לְעוֹלָם כִּי-שָׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה
יְהוָה אֶת-הַשְׁמִים וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְׁבִיעִי שְׁבָת
ח' וַיַּגְפֵּשׁ: נִתְּן אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּכָלְתוֹ לְדֹבֶר אֶת-
בְּהָר סִינֵי שְׁנִי לְחוֹת הַעֲדָת לְחוֹת אָבִן בְּתֻבִים באֲצַבע
אֶלְהִים: וַיַּרְא הָעָם כִּי-בָשֵׁש מֹשֶׁה לְרֹדֶת מִן-הַהָר
לְב'

ס' ר' יונבש. כתלגרמו וננה. וכל ל'ן נופך קו להן נפץ, שמתוך נפץ וגיטינמו בכרנגיינו מופרחת המלחמה. מיי סכטוב בו לו' יערן ולו' גיט' (ספחים ממכח) וככל פועלן כמלamer הקטב' מונחה במנון, ובכדר תלון מה סטייל יכול לאבד מושיע וליק' ס' קיטו לרוי; (יח) וחאן אל משה וגוי. להן מוקסדים ומולחו בזורה (פסחים ו') מתו שטן טיג' קיטמו נטהרכו גלומות ודיות קודס לנו' מולחכת המכין ימים רציס דיא, זאכרי צ'י' קיטמו נטהרכו המכין והוקם קוחה צ'ינען הכהפכויס נטיריה קאנ'ק'ב' ליטרלאט, ומלהrichtה הקהילו נטהרכו המכין והוקם קוחה צ'ינען (הנחותה לה): בבלתו. כלטעו כתיג', חמר, סנמפלס לו' וורה צממה ככללה מהקון, של'ה ריש' יוכן לנמוד כולו צוון מועט כיה (הנחותה הי'). ד' ג', מה כלה מתקומט צ'כ' קיטוין, אין סלהמורייס כספר צ'ען' (אג'יכ'יד), ק' ג' ת' ח' נאריך ליטיא צק' צ'כ' פפריס' (קס צ'ו): לדבר אותו. התקדים והמאכטיטים צעווולגה המכחטיטים: לדבר אותו. מלמד

16. שְׁמַרְוּ — Shall observe. Israel shall scrupulously count the days until the Sabbath, so that no error in calculation will cause the wrong day to be observed as the Divinely ordained day of rest (*Ibn Ezra, Chizkuni*).

לעשות אַת־הַשָּׁבָת — *To make the Sabbath.* It is a token of respect for the Sabbath that one prepare for it ahead of time so that he will have fine food for the day (*R' Bachya*), and to avoid the danger that one will perform forbidden work on the day itself (*Chizkuni*). Thus, one “makes” the Sabbath by preparing for it so that it will be observed properly when it arrives. According to the Midrash, one who observes the Sabbath in this world *makes* the Sabbath in Heaven, i.e., he elevates its spiritual standing, by abstaining from forbidden activity and thereby affirming his faith in the Creator (*R' Bachya*).

17. וַיְשׁוּב — And was refreshed. The verse describes God in human terms, as one who needs rest after six days of work (*Rashi*). According to *Sforno*, the term refers to the Sabbath and derives from **שָׁבֵת**, soul: The Sabbath was endowed with an extra degree of spirituality to better enable Jews to realize the goal for which God created man in His image.

18. Moses receives the Tablets. Having completed the instructions regarding the Tabernacle and the Kohanim, the Torah goes back to the narrative of the Giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. According to *Rashi*, this is an instance of the principle that the Torah is not always written in chronological order: The above commandments regarding the Tabernacle were given to Moses on the day after Yom Kippur, over three months after the Ten Commandments were given, and it was then that Moses commanded the nation to begin the contributions for its construction (35:1). But the episode of the Golden Calf, which begins in the next chapter, took place on the seventeenth of Tammuz — only forty days after the

Revelation. *Ramban* (*ibid.*), however, holds that the commandment to build the Tabernacle was given to Moses during his first forty days on the mountain, but its transmission to the nation was delayed because of the sin of the *Eigel*.

Sforno explains the sequence of the chapters, as follows: In God's original plan there would have been no need for a Tabernacle, for every Jew was to have had the status of a Kohen, would have been worthy of building his own altar, and of being a resting place for the Divine Presence. If so, why did this potential not come to fruition? Why was God's intent replaced by the preceding chapters about a central Tabernacle and why was it necessary to designate a priestly family? The Torah will now explain that Israel fell from its spiritual pinnacle because of the Golden Calf. No longer could it be a nation of individual priests and tabernacles. From that point onward, Israel needed a central Tabernacle toward which it would direct its aspirations, and a holy, priestly family that would be dedicated to God's sacrificial service.

וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ מֹשֶׁה — *He gave Moses*. Throughout the forty days that Moses was on Mount Sinai, God taught him the Torah, but he constantly forgot. Finally, God presented it to him as a gift, as if it were his bride (*Rashi*). If it was impossible for a human being, even one as great as Moses, to absorb God's wisdom without Divine assistance, why didn't God present it to him immediately, without forcing him to go through forty days of frustrating failure? *Chiddushei HaRim* explains that the Torah can be understood only with God's help, but He gives such assistance only to someone who tries his utmost to master it on his own. Thus, Moses earned the Divine gift by means of his effort. The same is true of every student of the Torah. It is up to us to try to the limit of our ability; then we can hope for God's help.

שני לוחות העזרה — *The two Tablets of Testimony*. The *vav* is

on the Sabbath day shall be put to death.'

¹⁶ "The Children of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath an eternal covenant for their generations. ¹⁷ Between Me and the Children of Israel it is a sign forever that in a six-day period HASHEM made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed." Moses Receives the Tablets ¹⁸ When He finished speaking to him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two Tablets of Testimony, stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God.

32

¹ *The people saw that Moses had delayed in descending the mountain, and the people*

omitted [תְּהִלָּת] so that the word can be read as if it was in the singular [תְּהִלָּה], *tablet*. This teaches that the two Tablets were identical in size (*Rashi*). *Yefeh Toar* explains that although in the plain sense, this refers to the actual size of the Tablets, it has a deeper meaning, as well. The five commandments on the first Tablet speak of Man's relationship with God, while the five commandments on the second Tablet refer to Man's relationship to his fellow human beings. By indicating the two Tablets were equal, the Torah teaches that both kinds of commandments are equally important; the Torah does not recognize the primacy of "ritual" over "social" laws and vice versa. Both are necessary parts of the Divine scheme.

That the Ten Commandments were inscribed on two Tablets instead of one was because they "testified" that God rested His Presence upon Israel, and testimony must be rendered by two witnesses. The two Tablets also allude to their dual nature: The stone was from the earth and the script was from heaven (R' *Bachya*).

32.

1-6. עֲגָל הַיַּעַד / צָבֵל הַיַּעַד / *The Golden Calf*. If the sin of the Golden Calf [*Eigel*] was one of mass idol worship, as a cursory reading of the verses seems to indicate, the entire affair is incomprehensible, both from the standpoint of Aaron, who fashioned it, and Israel, which demanded and worshiped it. Indeed, the consensus of commentators, such as *Ramban*, *Ibn Ezra*, *Kuzari*, and others, agrees on an entirely different interpretation.

It is inconceivable that Aaron could have created an idol, even if he had been threatened with death. The Torah requires a Jew to give up his life rather than worship idols; can one believe that God's chosen anointed Kohen Gadol would fail to withstand a test that countless thousands of Jews have withstood over the centuries? If he *had* been guilty of idolatry, he would have been the first one to be liable to the death penalty; instead he was virtually whitewashed; he went on to serve in the Tabernacle for the next forty years and was Moses' partner in leading the nation and receiving many of the commandments from God. Furthermore, the only sin with which the Torah charges him is that he joined with Moses in striking the stone, rather than speaking to it (*Numbers* 20:12). Clearly, therefore, Aaron was not a party to the sin of idolatry.

The people, too, did not deny Hashem. They said explicitly that they needed a replacement for *Moses*, not for Hashem. Had they truly believed that the Golden Calf was some sort of god, they would not have melted away when *Moses* returned, and they would not have permitted him to destroy their new deity. Rather, their enthusiasm for the Golden Calf

was only because it was a substitute for their vanished leader; but once *Moses* was back they recognized that their allegiance to the new "god" had been a terrible and foolish mistake. Even the Jews who truly worshiped it as an idol were a tiny minority of only three thousand people, just about one half of one percent of the grown male population, and even they were the Egyptian rabble, *Eirev Rav*, that flocked to join the Jews when they left Egypt. These erstwhile Egyptians proclaimed when the new god emerged from the flames, "This is **your** god, O Israel." They did not refer to it as **our** god, because they were outsiders who were addressing the Jews.

What, then, was the reason for this outrageous sin? It began with an error of fact and mushroomed into a grievous misunderstanding of Israel's relationship with God. The people thought that *Moses* was dead (see v. 1) and they had been left without a leader and intermediary between themselves and God. They thought that just as they had addressed God through *Moses* when they needed salvation at the sea or when they had no food or water, and just as *Moses* had led them to Sinai and directed them in battle, so too they needed some tangible presence to take his place. This was not a denial of God; it was an erroneous belief that a *Moses* was needed to represent them before God and convey His teachings and beneficence to them. This is why Aaron acquiesced to them though he knew they were wrong. Since their error did not involve idolatry, he felt that it would be best for him to appear to yield until he could wean them from their mistake. This idea will be developed in the course of the chapter and the commentary.

Bais Halevi asserts that their error was one that, in a different form, is not uncommon even today. The people knew that their sacrificial service was performed by a specific person, Aaron, and in a specific place, the Tabernacle. They thought, therefore, that they had the right and the need to create another such vehicle for their service — in effect, to design their own "tabernacle" that would suit their needs, as they saw them. Here lay their mistake. Jews cannot custom-tailor their religion or their Sanctuary. The Tabernacle's specifications are based on Divine mysteries that are beyond human understanding, and it is impossible for anyone to use the Tabernacle, the Temple or any of the Torah's commandments as the prototype for a man-made religious practice.

1. בְּמִשְׁמָךְ מֹשֶׁס — *Moses had delayed*. The catastrophe of the Golden Calf was precipitated by a tragic error. *Moses* went up to Mount Sinai on the seventh of Sivan and said that he would be there for forty days and return in the morning. The people thought that the day of his ascent counted as the first

וַיִּקְהֶל הָעָם עַל-אֹהֶן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ קְוֹם | עֲשֵׂה-לָנוּ
אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יַלְכֵל פְּנֵינוּ בִּזְהָה | מֹשֶׁה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר
בְּהַעֲלֵנוּ מִארֶץ מִצְרָיִם לֹא יַרְעֵנוּ מִה-דָּבָר לֹו: וַיֹּאמֶר
אֱלֹהֵם אֹהֶן פְּרֻקּוּ גּוֹמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בָּאָזְנוּ נְשִׁיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם
וּבְנָתִיכֶם וְהַבִּיאוּ אֵלֵי: וַיַּתְפַּרְקּוּ בְּלַ-הָעָם אֶחָת-גּוֹמֵי
הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בָּאָזְנוּ הָמִים וַיַּבִּיאוּ אֶל-אֹהֶן: וַיַּקְרֵב מִידָּם
וַיַּצְאֵר אֶתְנוֹ בְּחִरְטָה וַיַּעֲשֵׂהוּ עֲגָל מִסְכָּה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
אֱלֹהֵיךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הַעֲלוֹךְ מִארֶץ מִצְרָיִם: וַיַּרְא אֹהֶן
וַיַּבְנֵן מִזְבֵּחַ לְפָנָיו וַיִּקְרֵא אֹהֶן אֹהֶן וַיֹּאמֶר תָּגֵל לִיהְוָה מְחרָה:
וַיִּשְׁבְּרִימְוּ מִמְּחֹרֶת וַיַּעֲלֹו עַלְתָּה וַיַּגְשֵׂשׁ שְׁלָמִים וַיִּשְׁבַּב הָעָם
לְאָכֵל וְשָׁתוּ וַיִּקְרְמוּ לְצַחַק:
וַיִּדְבֶּר יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵים לְרַבֵּד בַּי שְׁחוֹת עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר
הַעֲלִית מִארֶץ מִצְרָיִם: סְרוּ מִהָּר מִן-הַדָּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צוִיתֶם

ט) מסבה. בזון מכתה. 7"ג, ק"ב"ג קנטוריין וזה קו צו כנימטריה של מסכה (קס): אללה אלהיך. ונה נלמר הלה הלאני. מכחן צערך רב צעלו ממלכי סס זקנאלנו טעל להן וזה צפאתו, וזה"ג בטחו רת יכללה חהריו (קס): (ה) וירא אהרן. קסחים זו רוח חייס, נבלאלר כתביעת שור הולך מצט (תקליש קו:), וכלה סקליליה מעטס קפמן ולן זיא לא פה לדחווס נגמר: ווין מזובח. לדרוות: ואומר חוג לה' מחר. לולא דיסים, מהל' ג' מסק קודס ציעדוז. זו פצומו. ומדרכו ציילך לר' בכ' (ג:) דברים זרכחה רלה אהרן. רלה חור בז' יהוינו צדקה מוכיים והגנוו, וכו' וכן מזבח לפני, יוניבן מזובח לפוני (פאנדרין ז'). ועוד רלה ואמר מועט ציטלה צי סכלון ולן כס. שטעו רלה ומוריה ה' סס צויניס רת קמזהח זה מאי' גדור ווה מאי' ה' גבור ונומלה מה מלחתן פעוטה זכמת ה'חמת, מטון שחמי' צונגה לויתן ומתקען במלחתני' צין קך ובז' קר מזחה צה: חוג לה'. בצעו יאס נטמיס. בזוח פה צביה מסק ווינצדו רלה אמוקס וויק' ד' (קס): (ו) וшибיהם. בצען זדים כדי ציחתונו לzechק. יס' צמץ מען קזה גלון מריעו, כמו במלחתן נקחן קז' (ברלהת נט':), ופיכת דמים, כמו גבלאלר יקומו כל' גנעריס ויסחקו לפנינו (סמותל ג' צ'י), אף כן נאגר חור (תנוומת צ':) (ז) וירבר. בזון קומי סת, כמו יודבד הפס קומות וצלבנית מאי': לך רד. דד מגולדקן, נה' נתמי נך גולדא בזביס (ברלוות נט'). בזוויטה צעה ננדלה מהה מפי' צ' צל מעלה (ט' ר' מז:ג:) שחתה עמר. דחת העם נל' נלמר הלה מען, מעד רב צקכלה מפלמאן גו'ירעס ולן גמלכת צ', ווילרט וווע' ציזקון גראיס צציניא, סס שחתו וצחיםו (קס ז':)

day of the forty, and therefore Moses would be back on the sixteenth of Tammuz. That was a mistake. Moses meant that he would be away for a full forty days and forty nights, which meant that he would be back on the *seventeenth*. When noon of the sixteenth came and went without Moses' return, the people became fearful. Satan seized the opportunity and created an illusion of darkness and turmoil, and showed them an image of a dead Moses being carried in heaven (*Rashi*).

Recanati explains that the spiritual level of the nation was so high after the revelation of the Ten Commandments that if Moses had come down bearing the Tablets, the goal of Creation would have been fulfilled and there would have been no more death or temptation to do evil, as we know it.

אשר ילכו לפניינו. הלוותם כלכה חייו לנו (סנהדרין סג): כי זה משה האיש. כמוון דמות מטה ו' ה' מטבח קרלה לאס שצטן צונת'יס [הוֹמוּן] חלייר רקיע ספמייס (ב' ר' מה'ז; זכת פט): אשר העלו מארץ מצרים. והוא מועלנו לנו דרך הפליג נעלין צה, עטס לילין לנו להלואת הפליג לנו לפינויו: (ב) באזוני נישיבם. חמל לילין צלען הנטיס וטלידיס חסיט עט פכטיטין צמלו יטעלקן דרכ' וצטוקך דרכ' בטה מסה. וזה לנו סטמיטו ופליקן מעל ו' ה' מסלן טלען ותנומומל כליה: פרקו. לדן צויי גוזרת כרך לייז, כמו ברינו מגוות ברך: (ג) יותפרקו. לבון כריית מחת, כבנוטום מהזיניס נמלחו סט פטוקיס מנומיאס, דיקרי' ג' צלען: את נזמי. כמו כהוֹתִי הַתְּכִרֵר (טפיט טכט) אין הטמיין: (ד) ייצר איזו בחרת. יס להרגנו צפני פיטס. התחד וילך לבון קירלה, צחרטן ל' סודר, כמו והמטפקות והתריטים (טטעס: (ב'כ) וילך בכרייס כספ' צבאי הריטיס (מלכיס 3 ניגן; גראונז יונגן). וה' זילך לדן זורה, צחרטן כל' הומנות הולפיין, צחוריין וחולטיין זו נורוות צוואצ' צעת סופר שחולט הומיות צלחות ופנסקון, כו' וכלהוב מלוי צחרטן הלאם (טביס ח'ה). והוא צק' ה' וילך קיס ציפטה, לדון ייזו, סטן כל' הומנות חקלוין זו צאס' הומיות זקסדים צקוריין צלען' ג' מי' ז' ומוי'יף' עט ייז' הוֹמָמָה: עגל מסבה. כוין צאנטילו לוחר צבר צמלו מכבפי מילך גב צמלו עטמאס ממיליס ועטחלו צכטפס. יס' הומרים מיכה היה צס צינ'ה מטוק דמושי צינ' צנטמען זו במלריס, וכינה צי' צי' צס וטס צקצק צו מטה ער' פלה צור לאטמולות הדרונו צל' יוקט נילום, ואטלאו לטר' שכור וילך נטנג' ותנומומל

The world would have reverted to the stage of perfection that existed at the beginning of Creation. Satan, whose mission it is to tempt people to evil, fought this threat to his power and succeeded in deceiving the people.

אשר ילכו — *That will go.* This reference to the requested god is in the plural, implying that they desired many gods (*Rashi*).

This is not to say that the people denied the omnipotence of Hashem, for the rest of the verse makes clear that they wanted a replacement for Moses, whom they described as the one who had brought them up from Egypt. Since they obviously knew all along that Moses was not an independent redeemer, but the messenger of God, they could not possibly have thought that Moses would be replaced by a

The gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Rise up, make for us gods that will go before us, for Golden Calf this man Moses who brought us up from the land of Egypt — we do not know what became of him!”

² Aaron said to them, “Remove the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, sons, and daughters, and bring them to me.”

³ The entire people removed the gold rings that were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

⁴ He took it from their hands and bound it up in a cloth, and fashioned it into a molten calf. They said, “This is your god, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt.”

⁵ Aaron saw and built an altar before him. Aaron called out and said, “A festival for HASHEM tomorrow!”

⁶ They arose early the next day and offered up elevation-offerings and brought peace-offerings. The people sat to eat and drink, and they got up to revel.

God's Anger ⁷ HASHEM spoke to Moses: “Go, descend — for your people that you brought up from the land of Egypt has become corrupt. ⁸ They have strayed quickly from the way that I have commanded

pantheon of deities to the exclusion of Hashem. Rather, they thought that God assigns powers and responsibilities to subordinate powers, as it were. In their view, Moses was one such power [others were the pillars of smoke and fire that led the nation (*Ramban; R' Bachya*)]; now they wanted other such surrogates of God. Though such a misconception could lead to idolatry, their goal was not to worship an idol (*Maharsha to Sanhedrin* 63a).

2-3. Aaron knew that they were grievously mistaken, but he calculated that if he defied them they would kill him, and if they did, that would make their sin and rebellion even worse. Indeed, Hur, whom Moses had assigned to share the leadership with Aaron in his absence, had resisted and been killed (*Rashi* to v. 6). Aaron, therefore, stalled for time. He asked for the gold jewelry of the women and children. He was certain that they would refuse to surrender it immediately, and by the time the rebels succeeded in seizing the gold, Moses would probably be back, squelching the panic. Aaron miscalculated, for the people were so enamored of the prospect of a new god that they had the gold in hand without delay (*Rashi*). This is a classic example of the power of crowd psychology, in which a mob is capable of excesses beyond the imagination of any of its individual members.

4. וְשַׁפֵּן — And [he] fashioned it. Aaron bound up the gold and threw it into the fire [hoping that a shapeless mass would emerge, thus causing further delay until Moses' return], but the Egyptian sorcerers of the *Eirev Rav* exercised their occult powers to cause the calf to emerge (*Rashi*). Although Aaron did not *fashion* the calf in the literal sense, he is described as its maker since he was the one who threw the gold into the fire (v. 24), the act that resulted in the creation of the Golden Calf (*Or HaChaim*).

5. Again, Aaron played for time. He built an altar for a major religious festival the *next* day, in the hope that their enthusiasm would dissipate or that Moses would be back. He specified that the festival would be for HASHEM, not the calf, for his real, though hidden, intention was that when Moses returned with the Tablets there would indeed be a joyous celebration (*Rashi*). According to *Sforno*, he mentioned Hashem as a rebuke to the rebels.

6. וְשָׂבֵד — To revel. The term implies the three cardinal sins of idolatry, licentiousness, and murder. In addition to their worship of the Golden Calf, they committed immoral acts and they had murdered Hur, who attempted to restrain them (*Rashi*). This was the nadir of the tragic episode, the point at which error turned to wantonness.

7-10. God's anger. With the spiritual downfall of his people, Moses was dismissed from his lofty perch, for he had been elevated to a heavenly status only for Israel's sake; now that they had become unworthy, God ordered him to descend from Sinai (*Rashi*). It is a general rule of Jewish leadership that the merit of the community is indispensable to the success of those who serve it. As the Sages teach, “the merit of the community's forefathers aids them, and their righteousness [i.e., that of the forefathers] endures forever” (*Avos* 2:2).

It is true, as noted above [introduction to vs. 1-6], that the original intent in making the calf was not to worship it as a god, that the initiators of the project were the *Eirev Rav*, and that only an infinitesimal proportion of Jews actually worshiped it. However, the sin was most grievous, nonetheless. As is clear from verse 27, there *were* Jews, few though they were, who were guilty of idolatry. The rest of the people did not resist the *Eirev Rav* or the Jewish worshipers. This constituted either silent acquiescence or lack of faith, which was a condemnation of the nation as a whole.

Had God sent Moses back to the nation a day sooner, this tragedy would have been prevented, but He did not do so because the events of the *previous* day did not constitute idolatry, as explained above (*Ramban*). *Or HaChaim* contends that God did not send Moses back before the situation deteriorated because the Divine word had declared that he would be atop the mountain for forty days and forty nights (24:12, 18), and God's word is inviolate, or because the full extent of God's teachings to him required a full forty days.

7. וְעַמָּךְ — Your people. This was an implied rebuke to Moses, as if to say, “Those who caused the sin are *your* people, the Egyptian *Eirev Rav*, whom you accepted without consulting God” (*Rashi*).

עֲבָדוּ לְהַזְוֹן עַגְלָתְכֶא וִסְגִּידָרָה לְהַזְבְּחָה
לָהּ וְאָמַרוּ אַלְין דְּחַלְמָה יִשְׂרָאֵל דִי
אַסְקוֹרָ מַאֲרָעָא דְּמַצְרִים: טְנוּאָמָר זַי
לְמִשְׁאָה גָּלִיל קְדֻמִּי עַמָּא הַדִּין וְהָא עַמָּא
קְשִׁי קְדָל הוּא: וּבְעָן אֲנָה בַּעֲוֹתָר מִן
קְדֻמִּי וַיְתַקֵּף רָגִינָה בְּהַזְוֹן וְאַשְׁצָנוֹן וְעַבְדָּה
יִתְּהַר לְעַם סָגִי: אַוְצָלִי מַשָּׁה קְדָם זַי
אַלְלהָה וְאָמַר לְמַאּה יִתְּקֵף רָגִינָה בְּעַמָּקָה
דִי אַפְקָטָא מַאֲרָעָא דְּמַצְרִים בְּחִיל רַב
וּבְרַא תְּקִיפָא: כִּי לְמַאּ יִמְרָא מַצְרָא
לְמִימְרָב בְּבִישְׁתָא אַפְקָנוּן לְקַטְלָא יִתְהַזּוֹן
בִּינִי טוֹרִיא וְלְשִׁצְיוֹתָהּוּן מַעַל אַפִּי
אַרְעָא תּוֹב מַתְהָזָקָה רָגִינָה וְאַתְּבָמָן
בְּבִישְׁתָא דְּמַלְלָתָא (נֵיא דְּחַשְׁבָּתָא)
לְמַעְבָּד לְעַמָּךְ: יְאַדְבֵּר לְאַבְרָהָם
לִיצְחָק וּלְשָׂרָאֵל עַבְדֵיךְ דִי קִימְטָא
לְהַזְוֹן בְּמִימְרָב וּמַלְלָתָא עַמְהֹז אַסְגִּי יְהָ
בְּנִינְכָּו בְּכּוּבִּי שְׁמִינִיא וּכְלָ אַרְעָא הַדָּא
דִי אַמְרִיתָ אַתָּה לְבְנִינְכָּו וַיְחַסְנוּן לְעַלְמָם:
וְתַּחַב זַי מִן בְּיִשְׁתָא דִי מַלְלִיל לְמַעְבָּד
לְעַמָּה: טְוַאַתְּפָנִי וְנַחַת מַשָּׁה מִן טוֹרָא
וּתְוִרְנִי לְוַחִי סְהָדוֹתָא בִּירָה לְחַי בְּתִיבָּין
מַהְתָּרִין עַבְרִיהָזָן מַפָּא וּמַפָּא אַגְנוֹן
בְּחַיְבָנִי: טְוַלְוַתְּאָה עַזְבָּרָה דִי אַגְנוֹן
וּכְתַבָּא בְּתַבָּא דִי הָוָא מְפַרְשָׁ

עֲשָׂו לְהֶם עַגֵּל מִסְכָּה וַיִּשְׁתַּחַווּ-לָו וַיַּזְבְּחוּ-לָו וַיֹּאמְרוּ
אֱלֹהָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָעָלָוק מַארְץ מִצְרָים:
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-מֹשֶׁה רְאֵיתִי אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהַנֶּה עַמְּדָה
קְשָׁה-עֲרָף הַוָּא וְעַתָּה חֲנִיכָה לִי וַיַּחֲרֵב אֲפִי בְּהָם וְאֲכָלָם
וַיַּעֲשֵׂה אָוֹתָה לְגֹוי גָּדוֹל: וַיַּחֲלֵל מֹשֶׁה אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיו וַיֹּאמֶר לְמַה יְהוָה יִחְרֵב אֲפִי בָּעֵמָר אֲשֶׁר
הוֹצֵאת מַארְץ מִצְרָים בְּכֹחַ גָּדוֹל וּבִיד חֹזֶקה: לְמַה
יֹאמְרוּ מִצְרָים לְאָמֵר בֶּרֶעָה הַוְצִיאָם לְהַרג אֶתְכֶם בְּהָרִים
וְלְכָלְתֶם מִעַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה שָׁבוּ מַחְרֹן אֲפִי וְהַנְּחָתָם
עַל-הָרָעָה לְעַמָּךְ: זָכֵר לְאָבָרָתָם לִיצְחָק וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל
עֲבָדֵיךְ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְהָם בָּךְ וַתְּדַבֵּר אֶלְהָם אֶרְבָּה
אֶת-זְרוּעָם בְּכֻובְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וּכְל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר
אָמַרְתִּי אֶתְכֶן לְזְרוּעָם וּנְחָלוּ לְעוֹלָם: וַיַּגְּחָם יְהוָה עַל-
הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר לְעַשׂוֹת לְעַמוֹ:

טו וילפָן נירְד מִשֵּׁה מִן־הַקָּרֶב וְשָׂנֵי לְחַת הַעֲדָת בַּיָּדו לְחַת
שְׁכָתְבִים מְשֻׁנֵּי עֲבֹרִיהם מִזֶּה וּמִזֶּה הוּם כְּתָבִים: וְהַלְחָת
מַעֲשָׂה אֱלֹהִים הַמָּה וּהַמְכֹתֵב מַכֹּתֵב אֱלֹהִים (הוּא חֲרוּת

רגנליים היו טומד לפניו צבעת כטפס ק"י נסעה כל רגל אחד (ברכום ל-ב'): אשר נשבעה להם בר. נו' נצבעה לאם עדבר זהה כליה, נו' צבעים וכל צהרים, וכל בחריס ולו' בגבינות, אלו' אך להט ק"יס, ובצבעך קיימת מועלס ס'ה' וכן צבעונך תקכים, זאנלהם אונחלרין צבעוני (ונחלרין) צי' נצבעני נס'ה' (ברכלתית כבצטו), ולוחק נחלמר וכקימוטי לך' צבעונה חלך נצבעני נארהס הצען (בצ'כו), ולעטך נחלמר חי' אל צדי פרכ' ורבצה וגוו' (בצ'כו: נצבענו צה'ה' (בצ'כו: צה'ה' מ'ג'ג': (טו) מעשה משני עברהיהם. כי הולטיות נקלחות, ומונקה נס'ה' טיה (בקט' קד'): (טו) מעשה אליהם ההמה. כממשנו, קו' צכובו' מצלחן. ד'ה', כלה'ס חלומו להבדיל כל פלוני ממלוכס פלונית, אך כל מעשוניו צה'ה' צטולס (תונומול טמי): חרות. לבון חרפת ותכלת מה' טה. עיניכס לבון חוקה, נטמלי'ר' צ'טעל'ן: (ז'

9. אֲשֶׁר־קָשָׁה־עַרְףּ הוּא — *It is a stiff-necked people.* This is the familiar simile for stubbornness, referring to one whose neck is too stiff to turn; consequently, he will never look backward once he has embarked on a course (*Ibn Ezra; Sforno*). Such a person will refuse to listen to criticism or admit a mistake. This was the trait that nearly doomed Israel. Even after describing their sin in the starkest terms (v. 8), God did not say that they should be destroyed; error can always be corrected if the will is there. But if the people are too stubborn to listen to reason, what hope is there for them?

10. — *הנִיחָה לִי* — Desist from Me. But Moses had not even responded to God's indictment of Israel; from what was he to desist? God was implying to Moses that Israel's fate was in his hands, for he had the power to pray for their salvation.

— which he did immediately (*Rashi*). Until then, Moses apparently felt that Israel's sin was so great that he had no right to pray for them. Since the Jews had never committed a sin of this magnitude, Moses could not have known that prayer was an appropriate or even possible response.

11-14. Moses' successful prayer. According to *Ibn Ezra*, this passage is not in chronological order, for Moses would not have prayed for Israel while it still harbored an idol in its midst. Rather, he prayed after he returned to the people and destroyed the *Eigel*, but the Torah mentions it here because the reason he prayed later was in response to God's implication in the previous verse that it was up to him to save the nation. *Ramban* disagrees. Having been told that the nation faced imminent destruction, he had to intercede immediately. Moses' opening question, however, was seem-

them. They have made themselves a molten calf, prostrated themselves to it and sacrificed to it, and they said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt.’ ”

⁹ HASHEM said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold! it is a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰ And now, desist from Me. Let My anger flare up against them and I shall annihilate them; and I shall make you a great nation.”

Moses' Successful Prayer ¹¹ Moses pleaded before HASHEM, his God, and said, “Why, HASHEM, should Your anger flare up against Your people, whom You have taken out of the land of Egypt, with great power and a strong hand? ¹² Why should Egypt say the following: ‘With evil intent did He take them out, to kill them in the mountains and to annihilate them from the face of the earth?’ Relent from Your flaring anger and reconsider regarding the evil against Your people. ¹³ Remember for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself, and You told them, ‘I shall increase your offspring like the stars of heaven, and this entire land of which I spoke, I shall give to your offspring and it shall be their heritage forever.’ ”

¹⁴ HASHEM reconsidered regarding the evil that He declared He would do to His people.

Moses Descends ¹⁵ Moses turned and descended from the mountain, with the two Tablets of the Testimony in his hand, Tablets inscribed on both their sides; they were inscribed on one side and the other. ¹⁶ The Tablets were God's handiwork, and the script was the script of God, engraved

ingly incongruous, implying that the outrage of the *Eigel* was not ample reason for God to be angry. Ramban explains that since the Exodus included a remarkable display of God's Attribute of Mercy on behalf of Israel and His Attribute of Judgment on behalf of Egypt, it was not proper for Him to turn His judgment against Israel just when they needed His mercy.

Or HaChaim comments that Moses' prayer appealed to God to find some way other than annihilation to deal with the sin. He made four points that, in combination, pacified God's anger: The nation was *His*, and if they were to disappear, the loss would be *His*; by taking them out of Egypt, He had designated them as the means to make His sovereignty known to the world; the Egyptians should not be given an opening to deride God's feat in liberating Israel; and, finally, the merit of the Patriarchs and God's oath to them should be enough to save Israel.

13. . . . זכר — Remember . . . If they have violated the Ten Commandments, think of Abraham who endured ten tests for the sake of Your glory. If the people deserve to be destroyed by fire, think of Abraham who let himself be thrown into a blazing furnace for Your sake. If they deserve the sword, think of Isaac who stretched out his neck on the altar of the *Akeidah*. If they deserve to be exiled, think of Israel (Jacob) who was exiled to Charan, under Laban (*Rashi*).

בך — By Yourself. [To strengthen the veracity of an oath, it is taken on something sacred, such as a Torah Scroll, or the oath-taker will say, “I swear by the Name of God,” or “by my life.”] Thus Moses now made the following point to Hashem:] You expressed Your oath to the Patriarchs not by means of transitory items, or even by heaven and earth, all of which it is in Your power to bring to an end. You swore by Your own essence — thus Your oath to the Patriarchs remains valid for eternity (*Rashi*).

14. וַיָּנַח מֹשֶׁה עַל־מִזְבֵּחַ — HASHEM reconsidered. God relented from His intention to destroy the nation immediately and replace it with Moses, but this does not mean that the sin of the Golden Calf was forgotten. To the contrary, as we will see below, those who worshiped it as an idol were put to death, Moses led the people in repentance, he went back to Mount Sinai to pray on their behalf continuously for forty days, and even after all of that, the residue of that sin remains with us.

15-19. Moses smashes the Tablets. The passage describes poignantly the conflict facing Moses. On the one hand he held the Tablets that were incomparably sacred, that were the physical embodiment of the word of God; on the other hand he encountered a people that had demonstrated itself unworthy of receiving them. He resolved the contradiction by smashing the Tablets in the sight of the people — a spectacle that shocked them into recognition of the enormity of their sin.

15. . . . בְּתֻבֵּים — Inscribed . . . The very manner in which the Tablets were inscribed was *testimony* to their Divine origin: Even though they were inscribed through and through, *on both their sides*, the writing was not reversed on either side. The writing was miraculous in another way, for, as the Sages teach (*Shabbos* 104a), the middle of the letters כ and the final כ remained suspended in mid-air (*Or HaChaim*).

16. חרota — Engraved. The Sages teach that this word can be pronounced *חרות*, *freedom*, as if the verse is saying that the Jew's path to freedom is inscribed on the Tablets. This teaches that the only truly free person is one who engages in the study of the Torah (*Avos* 6:2). The only real freedom is to live as God created man to live. Otherwise, one is subject to his own passions, the mores of society, or the despotism of dominant or fashionable cultures.

על לוחץך: וְשָׁמַע יְהוָשֻׁעַ יְתִכְלֵל עַמּוֹ
כִּד מִיְבֶּן וְאָמֵר לִמְשָׁה קָל קְרָבָא
בְּמִשְׁרִיתָא: חִזְאָמֵר לֹא קָל גְּבָרִין
לְנַצְחִין בְּקָרְבָא וְאֶלְאָ קָל חֲלִשִׁין
לְמַפְתְּרִין קָל דְּמַחְכִּין אָנָא שָׁמַע:
טְהִוָּה כְּדָ קָרִיב לְמִשְׁרִיתָא וְחַזָּא יְתִ
עַגְלָא וְחַגְגָא וְתִקְרָפָה רַוְגָּא דְּמַשָּׁה וְרַמָּא
מִידָּוּחָה יְתִ לְחַזָּא וְתִמְבָּרְתָּה יְתִהְוֹן בְּשִׁפְולִ
טוֹרָא: כְּנוּסָבָה יְתִ עַגְלָא דִי עַבְדוֹ וְאַוְקָד
בְּנוּרָא וְשָׁפָע דַּהֲנָה וְזַקִּיק וְרוּדָא עַל
אַפִּי מַיָּא וְאַשְׁקִיא יְתִ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
כְּאָנָמָר מַשָּׁה לְאַחֲרָנָה הָעָבָר לְהַעֲמָא
הַדִּין אֲרִי אַתְּחִתָּה עַלְוָה חֹזֶק אֶרְבָּא:
כְּבָנָמָר אַחֲרָנָה לֹא יַתְּקַרְפָּה רַוְגָּא דְּרַבְּנוּ
אַתְּ יַדְעַת יְתִ עַמָּא אֲרִי בְּבִישׁ הַוֹּא:
בְּגַנוּאַמְרוּ לְיִ עַשְׂהָה לְנוּ דְּחַלְןָ דִי יְהִכְוָן
קְרַמְנָא אֲרִי דְּרָן מַשָּׁה גְּבָרָא דִי אַסְקָא
פְּאָרָעָא דְּמַגְנִים לֹא יַדְעַנָּא מֵהַהָה
לְהָא: כְּבָנָמָרִת לְהַזָּן לְמִן דְּהַבָּא פְּרִיקָו
וַיַּהֲבָבוּ לְיִ וְרִמְתָּה בְּנוּרָא וְזַפְקָעַלָּא
סְדִירָן: כְּהַנְחָא מַשָּׁה יְתִ עַמָּא אֲרִי
בְּטִילָה הוּא אֲרִי בְּטַלְנוֹן אַחֲרָנָה לְאַפְקָא
(נִ"א לְאַסְכּוֹתָהוֹן) שָׁוָם בִּשְׁ לְדָרְרֵיהֶן:

וְעַל-הַלְלוֹת: נִישְׁמַע יְהוָשֻׁעַ אֶת-קְוֹל הָעָם בְּרַעָה וַיֹּאמֶר
יְהָ אֶל-מִשְׁה קָוָל מְלֹחָמָה בְּמִחְנָה: וַיֹּאמֶר אַיִן קָוָל עֲנוֹת
גְּבוּרָה וְאַיִן קָוָל עֲנוֹת חַלּוֹשָׁה קָוָל עֲנוֹת אֲנָכִי שָׁמַע:
יט נִיהִי בְּאַשְׁר קָרְבָּא לְהַמִּחְנָה וַיָּרָא אֶת-הָעָגָל וְמִחְלָת
נִיחָר-אָף מִשְׁה וַיַּשְׁלַח מִידָּוֹ אֶת-הַלְלוֹת וַיִּשְׁבַּר אֶת-
כַּתְּחַת הַהָר: וַיַּקְרֵחַ אֶת-הָעָגָל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂו וַיִּשְׁרַף בְּאַש
וַיַּתְּחַנֵּן עַד אֲשֶׁר-דָקָק וַיַּזְרַעַל עַל-פָנֵי הַמְּמִימִים וַיִּשְׁקַע אֶת-בְּנֵי
כָא יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֹּאמֶר מַשָּׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן מִה-עָשָׂה לְكָה הָעָם
כְבָהָה בְּיַד-הַבָּאָת עַלְיוֹן חַטָּאת גָּדְלָה: וַיֹּאמֶר אַהֲרֹן אֶל-
יִשְׂרָאֵל יְחִרְא אָפָ אַדְנִי אַתְּה יַדְעַת אֶת-הָעָם בַּיּוֹרֵעַ הוּא:
כג וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְיִ עַשְׂה-לְנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יַלְכוּ לְפָנֵינוּ בִּיְזָה
מַשָּׁה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַעֲלָנוּ מִאָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם לֹא יַדְעָנוּ מִה-
כֵד הָיָה לוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ לְמַיִם זָהָב הַתְּפִרְקָו וַיַּתְנוֹלְלִ
כְבָהָה וְאַשְׁלַבְהָו בְּאַשׁ וַיֵּצֵא הָעָגָל הָזָה: וַיָּרָא מַשָּׁה אֶת-
הָעָם בַּיּוֹרֵעַ הָוָא בִּיְזָה קַדְמָצָה בְּקָמִיהם:

רכ"ז

פס. ח' ט' עַדְס וְהַתְּלָהָ, צִיּוֹן, כְּמַכְפֵּת לְנֵי עַיר גַּדְעָת סָקָן מַרְכִּז. ט'יס צָלָה
הַתְּלָהָ, צִמְגָפָה, צָלָמָמָר וְיָגָר ט' לְתַהְעַט (טָהָן פְּסָקָן לְתַהְעַט, לְמַעַד
צְוֹעֲקָבָס וְיַיְהָ וְיַסְהָ: קָוָל עֲנוֹת. קָוָל חַרְופִּין גַּדְפָּין הַמְּמַנְנִין הַתַּהְעַט צְוֹמְטָן
סְכָלְמָנִין נָוָי (ב"ד מַהְלָה): (וַיַּ) וַיַּשְׁלַח מִזְוֹד וְגוֹ. הָמָגָן, מַהְלָה לְהַדְעָן
סְמָנוֹת לְמַרְסָה קוֹרָה כָּל צָנָנָר לְמַה יְהַלְלָן זָוָנָלָן (בְּדָבָר) בְּיַד
מְבָדְמִים וְהַמְּנִינָה לְסָס (בְּדָבָר): תְּחַת הַהָר. לְגַלְגִּיל סָלָה: (בְּ) וַיַּרְא. לְזָוָן פְּנִזְן. וְכֵן
יְוָהָלָל גְּנִילִת (חוֹיְבָה יְמָנוֹ). וְכֵן כִּי חַנְס מַוְלָה קְרַבְתָּה מַפְלִי (חוֹיְבָה יְמָנוֹ)
וְקַמְפִיּוֹת: וַיַּשְׁקַע אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. נִפְנִין לְגַדְסָק סְסָמוֹת (עוֹ"ז מַדָּה). זָלָס מִיּוֹתָם דְּנוֹן

17-18. Joshua, Moses' loyal servant and student, did not leave the foot of Mount Sinai during the entire forty days that Moses was away. It was not merely that he chose to follow Moses dutifully wherever he went; the point was that Joshua — more than any other Jew — truly belonged in the closest possible proximity to his teacher. As proof of this, the Talmud teaches that the manna of each individual fell at the place where he belonged. Thus, if there was a dispute regarding the ownership of a slave, Moses settled it by seeing at which master's tent the slave's manna appeared. During these forty days, Joshua's manna fell for him at the foot of Sinai, proving that he alone belonged with Moses [and thus alluding to his future role as Moses' successor] (*Rashi, Yoma 76a*).

ברעה — *In its shouting.* The sound of celebration around the *Eigel* was so loud that it was heard even at the foot of the Sinai. Joshua heard, but mistook it for a response to an aggressive attack. Moses corrected him, saying that it was clear from the sound that the noise represented something else entirely. *Ramban* cites a Midrash that Moses' answer was an implied rebuke to Joshua, as if to say that the future

leader of Israel must be able to detect the people's mood by the way they sound (*Ramban*).

It was a sound that was distressing to Moses, because it indicated that the people were enjoying and celebrating the blasphemous and immoral behavior to which they had sunk as they sang and gyrated around their new god (*Rashi*). Indeed, *Sforno* (to v. 19) comments that it was the rejoicing that most disturbed Moses. He despaired of changing and perfecting people who were wildly enjoying sin.

19. וַיַּשְׁלַח . . . אֶת-הַלְלוֹת . . . He threw down the Tablets. It is astounding that someone of Moses' awesome stature would destroy God's handiwork out of pique, no matter how justified his anger. Clearly he knew that he had to do so; following are some of the reasons offered for his decision:

- Moses reasoned that if it is forbidden for a heretic to eat the *pesach*-offering (12:43), surely a nation of heretics [meaning the masses of the nation that stood by complacently in the face of organized idolatry] cannot be given the entire Torah (*Rashi* from *Shabbos* 87a). *Gur Aryeh* adds that this reasoning applied only to Israel before they received the commandments in the form of the Tablets; once the Torah

on the Tablets.

¹⁷ Joshua heard the sound of the people in its shouting, and he said to Moses, “The sound of battle is in the camp!”

¹⁸ He said, “Not a sound shouting strength nor a sound shouting weakness; a sound of distress do I hear!”

Moses Smashes the Tablets ¹⁹ It happened as he drew near the camp and saw the calf and the dances, that Moses’ anger flared up. He threw down the Tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ He took the calf that they had made and burned it in fire. He ground it to a fine powder and sprinkled it over the water. He made the Children of Israel drink.

²¹ Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you that you brought a grievous sin upon it?”

²² Aaron said, “Let not my master’s anger flare up. You know that the people is disposed toward evil. ²³ They said to me, ‘Make us a god that will go before us, for this man Moses who brought us up from the land of Egypt — we do not know what became of him.’ ²⁴ So I said to them, ‘Who has gold?’ They removed it and gave it to me. I threw it into the fire, and this calf emerged.”

²⁵ Moses saw the people, that it was exposed, for Aaron had exposed them to disgrace among those who rise up against them.

was given, however, heresy and lack of faith do not free Jews from their responsibilities to carry out the commandments. — God commanded him to smash them (*Avos d'R' Nassan* 2:3).

— Given the size and weight of the Tablets, it was only through a miracle that Moses could carry them. When he came within sight of the sinful revelry, the letters of the Tablets floated back to heaven, and the stone without its holiness became unbearably heavy. This was a sign to Moses that they should be broken (*Yalkut* 393).

— The Tablets signified a new and higher stage in Israel’s spiritual standing, one that would be reflected in its physical life, as well. The Tablets represented freedom from the Evil Inclination and from the Angel of Death, because at Sinai Israel had elevated itself to the level of Adam before his sin. Now, with the *Eigel*, the earlier condition of spiritual weakness had returned, making it impossible for them to have the Tablets (*Or HaChaim*).

R’ Yaakov Kamenetsky offers an insight into why Moses smashed the Tablets only after seeing the people dancing around the idol. When he first heard that the Jews had made themselves a Golden Calf, he tried to give them the benefit of the doubt. A huge nation felt stranded in the Wilderness — what would they feed their children the very next morning? Without a leader and an intermediary to God, how would they survive? Surely, he thought, they made the idol only out of desperation and wished they had not been forced to do so. But when he saw them dancing, he realized that they had not done so reluctantly at all — they enjoyed their worship of the idol! Then he realized that there could be no justification for their deed and they did not deserve to have the Tablets.

20-29. Atonement. Moses had to rid the nation of its sin before he could beseech God to let them regain the Tablets and the spiritual role they had forfeited. First he had to purge the nation of the sinners, who, though relatively few,

had had an influence on the nation as a whole.

20. נִשְׁתַּחֲוֵל — He made [them] drink. There were three categories of sinners and hence corresponding categories of punishments (*Yoma* 66b): (a) Those who had been warned by witnesses not to serve the idol and did so anyway were liable to a judicially imposed death by the sword (vs. 26-28); (b) those who did so intentionally before witnesses, but had not been warned — and therefore could not be punished by the court — died in a plague (v. 35); (c) the punishment of the rest of the people is described here. The unfaithfulness of this last group to God was like that of an adulterous wife, so Moses imposed upon them a test like that given a *sotah*, a wife accused of adultery (see *Numbers* 5:16-28). He had them drink from water mixed with the particles of the ground-up Golden Calf (*Avodah Zarah* 44a). Only those who had worshiped it died, like the *sotah* who was guilty of the charge (*Rashi*).

21. Moses turned to Aaron, appalled that Aaron could have brought such a calamity upon the people. “What suffering did they impose on you to force you to do it to them?” (*Rashi*). “What did they do to cause you to hate them so that you did this to them?” (*Ramban*). “Granted that you may have had no choice but to make the *Eigel*, but the worst part of the sin was that they rejoiced with it, and that happened because you proclaimed a festival (v. 6). Why did you have to compound the sin by causing them to celebrate it?” (*Sforno*). “Granted that — because you were making an idol for others, not yourself (see above) — you were not required to die rather than comply, but still, to make an idol is liable to lashes. How could you have done it?” (*Or HaChaim*). “Your sin against God is given to repentance and atonement, but you were also guilty of a sin against people; only they can forgive you for that” (*Oznaim LaTorah*).

22-25. First, Aaron put the sin into the perspective that the long years of exposure to Egyptian idolatry had predisposed the nation toward such disgraceful behavior. Then he re-

וְוּקם מֹשֶׁה בַּחֲרָע מִשְׁרִיקָה וַיֹּאמֶר מֵן
דָּחְלֵיא דִּי יִתְהַזֵּן לְנֵתִי וְאַתְכְּבָשׂוּ לְתַהַ
כָּל בְּנֵי לֹוי: וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַזְכִּין אֶמְרֵר יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמוֹ אִישׁ-חַרְבּוּ עַל-יִרְבּוּ וְשׁוּבוּ
יְרֻבָּה עַבְרוּ וְתוּבוּ מִתְרָעָ
בְּמִשְׁרִיקָה וְקַטּוֹלָה גַּבָּר יְתַחַדְּשֵׂה וְגַבָּר
יְתַחַרְעָה וְאַגְּשֵׂה יִתְקַרְיבָּה: כִּי וְעַבְדוּ
בְּנֵי לֹוי בְּפַתְגָּמָא דְּמֹשֶׁה וְנַפְלֵן עַמָּא
בְּיוֹמָה תְּהָא בְּתַלְתָּא אַלְפִין גַּבָּרָא:
כַּט וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה קָרִיבוּ יְדַכּוּן גַּרְבָּא
יְוֹמָא דִין קָרֵם יְיָ אֲרֵי גַּבָּר בְּבָרְהָ
וּבְאַחֲרָה וְלִאִתְּתָה עַלְיכָוּ יְוֹמָא דִין
בְּרָכָה: לְנוֹתָה בְּיוֹמָה דְּבַתְרוֹהָ וַיֹּאמֶר
מֹשֶׁה לְעַמָּא אַתְּתָן חַבְתוֹן חֹזֶקָא רְבָא
וְכָעֵן אָסָק קָרֵם יְיָ מְאִים אַכְפֵּר עַל
חוּבְיכָוּן: לְאַוְתֵּב מֹשֶׁה קָרֵם יְיָ וַיֹּאמֶר
בְּכָעֵן חַבָּע עַמָּא הַדִּין חֹזֶקָא רְבָא וְעַבְדוּ
לְהַזְנֵן דְּחַלְן הַדְּרָבָה: לְאַוְתֵּב מְשִׁפְךָה דִּי
לְחוּבְיכָוּן וְאַם לְמַחְנֵן בָּעֵן מְשִׁפְךָה דִּי
בְּתַבְתָּא: לְאַוְתֵּב מְשִׁפְךָה דִּי חַבָּע
גַּדְקָמִי אַמְחָנָה מְשִׁפְךָה: הַוְכָעֵן אַיִל
בְּנֵר יְתַחַדְּשֵׂה לְאַמְרֵר דִּי מְלִילָה לְהַקָּא
מְלָאָכִי יְהָרָה קָרְמָה וּבְיוֹם אַסְעָרוֹתִי
וְאַסְעָרָלְהָוּן חֹזְבִּיהָוּן: לְה וּמְקָא יְיָ
יְתַחַדְּשֵׂה עַל דִּי אַשְׁתַּעַבְדוּ לְעַגְלָא
הַיְיָ עַבְדֵר אַהֲרֹן: אַוְמְלִיל יְיָ עַם מֹשֶׁה
אַיְזָל סָק מְקָא אַתָּה וְעַמָּא דְּאַסְקָפָא

כו נִעַמֶּד מֹשֶׁה בַּשְּׁעָר הַמְּחֹנָה וַיֹּאמֶר מַיְיָ לְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי
כִּי נִאָסְפָו אַלְיוֹ בְּלַבְנֵי לֹוי: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם כִּי-אָמָר יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמוֹ אִישׁ-חַרְבּוּ עַל-יִרְבּוּ וְשׁוּבוּ
מִשְׁעָר לְשָׁעָר בַּמְּחֹנָה וְהַרְגִּינוּ אִישׁ-אַתִּחְיוֹ וְאִישׁ
כִּי אַתִּרְעָהוּ וְאִישׁ אַתִּקְרָבּוּ: וַיַּעֲשָׂו בְּנֵי-לֹוי בְּדָבָר מֹשֶׁה
כַּט וַיִּפְלֶל מִן-הָעָם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא בְּשַׁלְשָׁת אַלְפִי אִישׁ: וַיֹּאמֶר
מֹשֶׁה מַלְאָו יְדֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם לְיְהוָה כִּי אִישׁ בְּבָנָו וּבְאָחִיו
לְוַלְתָּת עַלְיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה: וַיְהִי מִמְּחֹרֶת וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה
אֱלֹהֵי-הָעָם אַתֶּם חַטְאָתֶם חַטְאָתָה גְּדָלָה וְעַתָּה אַעֲלָה אֶל-
לְאִיּוֹה אָוְלֵי אַכְפָּרָה בְּعַד חַטְאָתֶם: וַיִּשְׁבַּב מֹשֶׁה אֶל-
יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר * אָנֹא חַטָּא הָעָם הַזֶּה חַטָּאָתָה גְּדָלָה וְנִיעַשׂ
*תני טעמי
לְבָנָם אֱלֹהֵי זָהָב: וְעַתָּה אַמְתְּשָׁא חַטָּאָתֶם וְאַמְ-אַיִן
לְבָנָם אֱלֹהֵי נָא מְסִפְרָךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּתַבְתָּחָת: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-מֹשֶׁה מַיְיָ
לְגַדְעַנִּי נָא מְסִפְרָךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּתַבְתָּחָת: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-מֹשֶׁה
לְדִי אֲשֶׁר חַטָּא-לִי אַמְחָנָנוּ מְסִפְרֵי: וְעַתָּה לְךָ וְנִיחַח אֶת-הָעָם
אֲלֹא אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרָתִי לְךָ הַנָּהָר מְלָאָכִי יָלֵךְ לְפָנָיךְ וּבְיוֹם פְּקָדֵי
לְהַוְפְּקָדָתִי עַלְלָם חַטְאָתֶם: וַיַּגְּפֵג יְהוָה אֶת-הָעָם עַל אֲשֶׁר
לְגַדְעַנִּי אֲשֶׁר עַשָּׂה אֶתְהָרָגָן
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-מֹשֶׁה לְךָ עַלה מֹזָה אַתָּה וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר הָעַלְתָּה

רכ"י

עליכם: (כו) מי לה' אל. כת' אל: כל בני לוי. מכמן צכל השבט כזכר (וימול סוכ):
(כז) כה אמר וגוי. וכין לומר. זוכה להלדים יתרכ (לטיל כב'יט). קר' סנוא
צמכליפלה: אחיו. מלמן, וסוכ' נאלל (וימול סוכ): (בת) מלאו יודכם. ק'ס ג'וגוניס
חוּופָס, צדְרָה זָה תפקנסו לאיום כהילס למקוס: כי איש. מכס' ימל' זיך בבננו
ובוים פקד'יו וגוי. עטה צמ'ת ליל' מלכ'וטס ייח' וומיד קמ' פתק'וטס זיל' פורענות צלה
טוווניטיס ופקדרתי עליהם מעט מן סענון זה טס סט' צל' קטו'נות. והן פורענות צלה
טל פ'לְלָה ז'ינִיס צ'ין קח'ת'ה ק'ת' מפרען עון קענ'ל (סאנדרין קב'): (לה) ויזוג'ה א'ת
העם. מיהה צ'יל' צמ'יס לעד'יס צל' קטרלה (וימול סוכ): (א) לך על' מה' מה'.
ג'וזה מכל קה'ל'ות צל' טלה. לך נלמר טלה. לך נלפי טלה לו צענ'ה געט' העס
ך' ר' ר' (טפייל צב': (לב) וג'ת' צ'יל' צמ'יס לעד'יס צל' קטרלה (וימול סוכ): (א) אתה והעם. כת' נלמר לך ממי'ו: ואם

עליכם: (כו) מי לה' אל. כת' אל: כל בני לוי. מכמן צכל השבט כזכר (וימול סוכ):
(כז) כה אמר וגוי. וכין לומר. זוכה להלדים יתרכ (לטיל כב'יט). קר' סנוא
צמכליפלה: אחיו. מלמן, וסוכ' נאלל (וימול סוכ): (בת) מלאו יודכם. ק'ס ג'וגוניס
חוּופָס, צדְרָה זָה תפקנסו לאיום כהילס למקוס: כי איש. מכס' ימל' זיך בבננו
ובוים פקד'יו וגוי. עטה צמ'ת ליל' מלכ'וטס ייח' וומיד קמ' פתק'וטס זיל' פורענות
טל פ'לְלָה ז'ינִיס צ'ין קח'ת'ה ק'ת' מפרען עון קענ'ל (סאנדרין קב'): (לה) ויזוג'ה א'ת
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ג'וזה מכל קה'ל'ות צל' טלה. לך נלמר טלה. לך נלפי טלה לו צענ'ה געט' העס
ך' ר' ר' (טפייל צב': (לב) וג'ת' צ'יל' צמ'יס לעד'יס צל' קטרלה (וימול סוכ): (א) אתה והעם. כת' נלמר לך ממי'ו: ואם

viewed their demand and his attempt to stall for time. Although Aaron did not wish to describe the catalogue of sins that ensued, Moses had already seen enough. Aaron had exposed the shame of the people, for not only the sinners were at fault, but those whose failure to respond had made it possible. This revealed the ignominy of the nation, for they had been disloyal to God and Moses.

26. — *Whoever is for HASHEM, join me!* Moses asked the Jews to make a decision and stop straddling the fence. Their response showed the depth of their spiritual fall, for only the Levites stepped forward; though the rest of the people were loyal to God, they would not dedicate themselves uncompromisingly to His service. *Haamek Davar* accounts for the relatively poor response to Moses' plea. By calling upon these volunteers to carry out death sentences

against the idolaters, Moses was about to expose them to great physical danger. Only those who were absolutely loyal to God would receive Divine protection, and the Levites were the only ones confident enough to accept the risk.

27. — *So said HASHEM.* Moses referred to 22:19, which says that those who bring offerings to idols will be destroyed (*Rashi*). Alternatively, Moses meant that when God agreed not to destroy the nation, He said that the overt idolaters must be executed (*Ramban*).

Moses now commanded the Levites to kill the guilty parties, regardless of who they were — even if it meant that they would have to execute close relatives. *Sforno* comments that this would give the rest of the people a chance to atone for their sin of apathy in having permitted the sinners to go unmolested; now they would permit the Levites to

²⁶ Moses stood at the gateway of the camp, and said, “Whoever is for HASHEM, join me!” — and all the Levites gathered around him. ²⁷ He said to them, “So said HASHEM the God of Israel, ‘Every man, put his sword on his thigh and pass back and forth from gate to gate in the camp. Let every man kill his brother, every man his fellow, and every man his near one.’ ”

²⁸ The Levites did as Moses said, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.

²⁹ Moses said, “Dedicate yourselves this day to HASHEM — for each has opposed his son and his brother — that He may bestow upon you a blessing, this day.”

Moses Prays ³⁰ On the next day, Moses said to the people, “You have committed a grievous sin! And now I shall ascend to HASHEM — perhaps I can win atonement in the face of your sin.” ³¹ Moses returned to HASHEM and said, “I implore! This people has committed a grievous sin and made themselves a god of gold. ³² And now if You would but forgive their sin! — but if not, erase me now from Your book that You have written.”

³³ HASHEM said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I shall erase from My book.

³⁴ Now, go and lead the people to where I have told you. Behold! My angel shall go before you, and on the day that I make My account, I shall bring their sin to account against them.”

³⁵ Then HASHEM struck the people with a plague, because they had made the calf that Aaron had made.

33

¹ HASHEM spoke to Moses, “Go, ascend from here, you and the people whom you brought up

carry out the judgment — also unmolested.

29. מלֹא יְרֻכָּם — Dedicate yourselves. By their courage and loyalty, the Levites earned the right to replace the firstborn and be designated as God’s chosen tribe, which would serve Him in the Temple (*Rashi*).

Moses called upon the Levites to carry on the task they began that day — to serve God bravely and unselfishly, even when it meant standing against guilty parties who were loved ones. To do that, no special title is necessary. When God’s service is derided, it is the responsibility of everyone to take up the cudgels and fight for principle. Moreover, no one can battle for God unless he maintains within his family and dear ones the same standards that he demands of others. Thus Moses emphasized that the greatness of the Levites lay in their readiness to move even against their closest relatives, if necessary (*R’ Hirsch*).

30-35. Moses prays. Moses’ first priority had been to prevent the threatened destruction of the people, but his ultimate goal was to regain their chosen status. Now that the nation had rid itself of the overt sinners, Moses could go back to Mount Sinai and pray for forgiveness.

31. זהב — Of gold. By stressing that the idol was made of gold, Moses implied a defense of the Jews. God had given them so much gold when they left Egypt that the temptation to sin was unbearable. Had God not given them the gold, they would not have sinned (*Rashi*).

32. עשְׂתָה — And now. Moses, the loyal and loving leader of Israel, “confronted” God, as it were: “If You forgive Israel, good! But if not, take my life and remove any mention of me from the Torah, for I cannot be a leader who failed to gain mercy for his people” (*Rashi*). According to *Sforno*, Moses was saying, “Whether or not You forgive them, take away

my personal merits from Your ledger and assign them to the credit of Israel.”

34. וְעַתָּה לֹךְ נִיחָח — Now, go and lead. In his appeal that God forgive Israel’s sin completely, Moses had said, “Now” (v. 32). God now used the same term in telling him that this could not and need not be, for the sin had been committed and its effects could not be completely erased. Nevertheless, Moses would lead them to *Eretz Yisrael*. Instead of God’s clearly obvious Presence accompanying them, however, He would dispatch His angel, meaning that natural events would take place in such a way as to make possible the achievement of Israel’s needs and God’s goals. This would not be a new phenomenon, for it was the manner in which God guided the destiny of the Patriarchs, but it was not what Moses and the people had hoped for in the aftermath of the Revelation at Sinai (*R’ Hirsch*).

וְבַיּוֹם פָּקְדֵי — And on the day that I make My account. Mercifully, God consented not to punish the entire nation at that time, but He declared that whenever they would sin in the future, they would suffer some of the punishment that they should have received in retribution for the sin of the *Eigel* (*Rashi*). The sense of this teaching is that the sin of the Golden Calf cannot be completely erased, because it left an indelible stigma on the people. Thus, whenever national sins are committed, they are due in part to the spiritual residue of the Golden Calf. Sin does not take place in a vacuum; we are heirs of our history.

33.

1-6. Aftermath of the Golden Calf. Expanding on the earlier commandment (32:34) that Moses was to lead the people to the Land, God said that He would carry out His pledge to the Patriarchs and drive out the Canaanite nations. However, God was still displeased with the nation, for the refer-

מְאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעֲתִי לְאַבְרָהָם
 בְּלִיצְחָק וְלִיעָקָב לְאָמֵר לֹאַרְעָך אֶתְנְגַנְנָה: וְשַׁלְחָתִי לְפָנֶיך
 מִלְאָךְ וְגַרְשָׂתִי אֶת־הַבְּנָעַנִי הַאֲמָלִיר וְהַחֲתִי וְהַפְּרָזִי הַחֲנוּ
 וְהַבְּיוֹסִי: אֶל־אָרֶץ זֹבֵת חָלֵב וְדָבָשׂ בְּיָלָא אֱלֹהָה בְּקָרְבָּךְ
 דְּכַי עַמְּקַשְׁתָּה־עַרְקָת אַתָּה פָּנוּ־אַכְלָה בְּהַרְבָּה: וַיִּשְׁמַע הָעָם
 אֶת־הַדָּבָר הָרָע הַזֶּה וַיַּתְאַבֵּל וְלֹא־שָׁתַּו אִישׁ עָדִין
 הָעָלִיו: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל
 אַתָּם עַמְּקַשְׁתָּה־עַרְקָת רְגֻע אֶחָד אֱלֹהָה בְּקָרְבָּךְ וּכְלִיתִיךְ
 וְעַתָּה הוֹרֵד עַדְיָךְ מִעְלָיךְ וְאַדְעָה מָה אָעָשָׂה־לְךָ:
 וְזַיְתְּנַצֵּל בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־עָדִים מִהָרְחָבָב: וּמֹשֶׁה יַקְחַ
 אֶת־הַאָהָל וְנַטְחַלֵוּ מִחוֹזָן לְמִחְנָה הַרְחָק מִן־הַמִּחְנָה
 וּקְרָא לוּ אָהָל מוֹעֵד וְהִיה בְּלִמְבָקֵשׁ יְהוָה יַצֵּא אֶל־
 חַאָהָל מוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר מִחוֹזָן לְמִחְנָה: וְהַיְהָ בְּצָאת מֹשֶׁה אֶל־
 הַאָהָל יַקְרָםוּ בְּלִהְעָם וַיַּצְבוּ אִישׁ פָּתָח אָהָלוּ וְהַבִּיטוּ
 ט אֶחָרֵי מֹשֶׁה עַד־בָּאוּ הַאָהָלָה: וְהַיְהָ בְּבָא מֹשֶׁה קָאָהָלָה
 יַרְדֵּן עַמּוֹד הַעֲנָן וְעַמְדֵד פָּתָח הַאָהָל וְדָבַר עַמְּמַשְׁה:
 וְרָאָה בְּלִהְעָם אֶת־עַמּוֹד הַעֲנָן עַמְדֵד פָּתָח הַאָהָל
 יַאֲקָם בְּלִהְעָם וְהַשְׁתַּחוּ אִישׁ פָּתָח אָהָלוּ: וְדָבַר יְהוָה

"ר"י"

ונמך: (ב) וְגַרְשַׁתִּי אֶת הַבְּנָעַנִי וְגוּ. 1. לוּמוֹת פָּנִים. וְסִגְנָנִי טַמֵּד וְפָנִים
 מִפְיַס מַלְלִי (וַיֹּקְרַב יְהוָה): (ג) אֶל אָרֶץ זֹבֵת חָלֵב וְדָבָשׂ. לֹא לוּמוֹר נֶקֶם
 לְהַנְּטוּפָס: בּוּ לֹא אֱלֹהָה בְּקָרְבָּךְ. לֹא חָנוּן נֶקֶם זָבֵחַ לְפִנֵּיךְ מִלְמָקָם:
 וְסִיס קוֹילָה לוּ אָהָל מוֹעֵד, צֹחַ צָהָב וְלְמַכְתִּיב קוֹילָה: בְּלֹא מִבְּקַשׁ הַדָּבָר.
 לְמַכְתִּיב פְּנֵי זָקֵן כִּמְקֹדֶל פְּנֵי כְּכִינָה (פְּנֵי כְּכִינָה מִבְּנָה כְּכִינָה
 כְּמוּ יוֹלָד. 4"ה, וְסִיס כָּל מַדְקָךְ כָּךְ, אֲפִילָה מַלְלִי כְּכִינָה כְּכִינָה סְוָהִלִּים מִקּוֹס
 סְכִינָה חֲדִיאִים חֲדִיאִים חֲדִיאִים חֲדִיאִים חֲדִיאִים חֲדִיאִים חֲדִיאִים חֲדִיאִים (ח) וְהִיא. נְצֵן
 אִישׁ עָדוֹן. כְּתִרְסִים צִימָנוּ לְאָס כָּל כָּלָא כָּל כָּלָא כָּל כָּלָא כָּל כָּלָא
 רְגֻע אֶחָד אֱלֹהָה בְּקָרְבָּךְ וְכְלִיתִיךְ. לֹא עַטְלָה קְלָרְכָס וְהַתְּסִים מִלְמָקָם צִי
 צְקִיות טְרָפְסָס הַעֲשָׂוָת גַּעַת לְחָדָשׁ, צְהָוָת צְוָתָו זְעָמָנָה, צְנָהָרָה צְבִי כְּמַעַט
 רְגֻע עַד יַעֲכֵר זְעָס (וַיַּעֲכֵר כָּוִיכָה), וְהַכְּלָה הַמְּסָסָה (ז), פְּלִיכָה טָוָס
 הַסָּהָה סְכָךְ זְהָבָכָה כְּכִינָה כְּכִינָה זְהָבָכָה זְהָבָכָה זְהָבָכָה זְהָבָכָה
 מִשְׁמָה. כְּמוּ וְמַדְבֵּר נָס מִשְׁמָה. תְּרִגּוּמוֹ וְמַתְמַלֵּל טָס מִשְׁמָה. כְּסָתוֹ
 וְיַמְמָת הַתְּסִיקָה מִדְבָּר הַלְּיוֹ (זְמַדְבָּר זְפָט) וְלֹא יָנוּ קוֹרֵל מִדְבָּר הַלְּיוֹ. כְּסָתוֹ
 קוֹרֵל מִדְבָּר מִצְמָע סְמָמֵל מִדְבָּר טָס סְכִידִוָּת: (ו) וְהַשְׁתַּחוּ. נְצֵן
 וְעַן וְלְלָהָה: יַקְחַת הַאָהָל. נְצֵן צָוָה כָּוָה, נְזַקְקָה חָלָא וְוּטָה מְחוֹן לְמַהְנָה.

ence to the oath implied that the people were still not worthy of inheriting the Land on their own merits. Despite Moses' pleas, the executions of sinners by the Levites, and the plague, the residue of sin had only been diminished, but not eliminated.

2. . . . הַכְּנָעָנִי . . . — The Canaanite . . . The list of Canaanite nations omits the Gergashite, because they fled the country, so they did not have to be driven out (*Rashi*).

3. כי לא אֲעַלָה בְּקָרְבָּךְ — Because I shall not ascend among you. Because you are a stiff-necked people and are therefore

fore always in danger of sinning and incurring My wrath, I cannot remain in your midst. Therefore I must send My angel with you. This declaration included two aspects of Divine displeasure: that God would not accompany them, and that even the angel would be with them only until they occupied the Land; then he would leave them (*Ramban*).

4. His jewelry. The *jewelry* was figurative. The Sages teach that in proclaiming their willingness to accept unquestioningly God's commandments and teachings, the Jews said, *we will do and we will listen*. In

Aftermath of the Golden Calf from the land of Egypt, to the land about which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I shall give it to your offspring.'² I shall send an angel ahead of you, and I shall drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite —³ to a land that flows with milk and honey, because I shall not ascend among you, for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I annihilate you on the way.'

⁴ The people heard this bad tiding and they became griefstricken, and no one donned his jewelry.

⁵ HASHEM said to Moses, "Say to the Children of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I ascend among you, I may annihilate you in an instant. And now remove your jewelry from yourself, and I shall know what I shall do to you.'"⁶ So the Children of Israel were stripped of their jewelry from Mount Horeb.

Moses' Tent ⁷ Moses would take the Tent and pitch it outside the camp, far from the camp, and call it the Tent of Meeting. So it was that whoever sought HASHEM would go out to the Tent of Meeting, which was outside the camp.⁸ Whenever Moses would go out to the Tent, the entire people would stand up and remain standing, everyone at the entrance of his tent, and they would gaze after Moses until he arrived at the Tent.⁹ When Moses would arrive at the Tent, a pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the Tent, and He would speak with Moses.¹⁰ The entire people would see the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the Tent, and the entire people would rise and prostrate themselves, everyone at the entrance of his tent.¹¹ HASHEM would speak

recognition of this devotion, angels came and affixed two crowns to their heads, one in honor of *we will do* and one in honor of *we will listen*. Now, they lost these two spiritual crowns (*Rashi*).

R' Bachya maintains that they literally removed their jewelry, to symbolize their pain at the loss of their spiritual crowns.

5. חורר עירך — Remove your jewelry. What they had done on their own (v. 4) was not enough; now God told them to remove all the symbols of the spiritual elevation that had been given them at Sinai (*Sforno*). These ornaments were the garments that had on them the blood of the covenant, which signified their exalted status (*R' Bachya*). As mentioned above (last note to 32:19), the First Tablets represented freedom from death. Now, recognizing the gravity of their sin, the people realized that they no longer deserved eternal life. This demonstrated the great degree of their remorse for what they had done and demonstrated the great degree of their repentance (*Ramban*).

7-11. Moses' tent. Since the people had fallen from their lofty spiritual perch and God had announced that His Presence would not reside among them, Moses left the camp and set up his tent in isolation from the sinners. There, God would speak to him. Moses' tent was known as the Tent of Meeting, the same title that was later given to the Tabernacle, and for the same reason. Like the Tabernacle, Moses would be available to any Jew who sought the word of God. The nation as a whole had been ostracized, as it were, but no individual Jew could be without the opportunity to approach God.

Rashi and *Ramban* disagree regarding when this took place. According to *Rashi*, the chronology was as follows: On 17 Tammuz, Moses broke the Tablets and on the eighteenth he carried out the judgment against the sinners,

as described in the preceding passage. On 19 Tammuz, he went back up to Mount Sinai for forty days of pleading for the people (*Deuteronomy* 9:18) [and he returned to the camp on 29 Av, when God agreed to forgive the people and give them the Second Tablets]. On Rosh Chodesh Elul, he went back to the mountain for a third and last forty-day period, during which God taught him the entire Torah again. On Yom Kippur, wholeheartedly and joyously, as it were, God became reconciled with Israel, and Moses returned to the camp with the Second Tablets. On the day after Yom Kippur, Moses told the people to begin bringing their gifts for the erection of the Tabernacle, and Moses set up his tent outside the camp until Rosh Chodesh Nissan, when the Tabernacle was inaugurated as the new Tent of Meeting.

Ramban, however, argues that since God had returned His favor to Israel after Yom Kippur, there would have been no need for Moses to move away from the camp then. Rather, *Ramban* maintains, Moses relocated his tent the day after he smashed the Tablets, because he had no way of knowing how long it would be before the people repented and earned God's renewed favor. His tent remained outside the camp until Rosh Chodesh Nissan, when the Tabernacle was inaugurated and it became the new Tent of Meeting.

7. בְּלִמְבָקֵשׁ ח' — Whoever sought HASHEM. Whoever sought closeness to God would go out to Moses' tent and consult him. The Torah does not say "whoever sought Moses," because a righteous person who is the source of God's word is referred to by the Name of God Himself (*R' Bachya*).

This verse demonstrates that one who seeks to study Torah should be ready to go into exile to find it (*Baal HaTurim*).

ב' וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-פָנָים כַּאֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר אִישׁ אֶל-רֹעָהוּ
וּשְׁבֵל אֶל-הַמִּחְנָה וּמִשְׁרָתוֹ יְהוָשֻׁעַ בָּנֵנוֹ נָעַר לֹא יִמְשֵׁל
מִתּוֹךְ הַאֲهָל:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה רְאֵה אַתָּה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים
לְעַמָּךְ קָדוֹם כִּי חָזַי דָּרְתָּ אָמַר לֵי אָסִיק יֵת
עַמָּךְ קָדוֹן וְאַתָּה לֹא הָרוּעַתְּנִי יֵת דַי
תְּשַׁלֵּח עַמְּךָ וְאַתָּה אָמַר תְּשַׁלֵּח בְּשָׂוִם
וְאַתָּה אָשְׁבַּחַתָּ רְחַמְּנִין קָדְמִין: אַ וְכָעָן אַם
קָעָן אֲשֶׁר חִיתָּה רְחַמְּנִין קָדְמָךְ אָזְדָעַנְיִ בְּעַן
יֵת אָזְרַח טוֹבָה וְאַדְעֵן רְחַמְּךָ בְּדִיל
דְּאֲשֶׁר בְּרְחַמְּנִין קָדְמָךְ וְגַלְיִ קָדְמָךְ אַרְיֵה
עַמְּךָ עַמָּךְ קָדוֹן: יְ וְאַמְרֵר שְׁכַבְתִּי תְּהִקָּה
וְאַנְתָּם לְהָ: טְ וְאַמְרֵר קָדְמָוִי אִם לִתְהִקָּה
שְׁכַבְתְּךָ מְהֻלְּכָא בְּנֵנוֹ לֹא תְּסַקְנֵנָא מִבָּא: טְ
וְבָמָה יְתִידְעֵךְ קָא אַרְיֵה אֲשֶׁר חִיתָּה
רְחַמְּנִין קָדְמָךְ אָנָה וְעַמְּךָ הָלָא בְּמַהְרָה
שְׁכַבְתְּךָ עַמְּנָא וְתִיעַבְדֵנָה לְנָא פְרִישָׁן לִי
וְלַעֲמָךְ מִשְׁנָן מַכְלָעָמָה דַי עַל אֲפִי
אַרְעָא: יְ וְאַמְרֵר כִּי לְמֹשֶׁה אָפָק יִתְהַגֵּמָא
קָדוֹן דַי מַלְתָּא אַעֲבֵר אַרְיֵה אֲשֶׁר חִיתָּה
רְחַמְּנִין קָדְמָיִ וְכִתְרֵר בְּשָׂוִם: כְּ וְאַמְרֵר
יְהִי אָשָׁה כִּי מַצָּאתָ חָן בְּעַנְיִ וְאַדְעֵג בְּשָׂמֶן: וְיַעֲשֵׂה
מִבְּלָד הָעַם אֲשֶׁר עַל-פָנֵי הַאֲדָמָה:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה גַם אַתְהָרָכְבָר הָנָה אֲשֶׁר דְבָרָת
יְהִי אָשָׁה כִּי מַצָּאתָ חָן בְּעַנְיִ וְאַדְעֵג בְּשָׂמֶן: וְיַעֲשֵׂה

11. פנים אל-פנים — *Face to face.* Unlike other prophets, Moses did not need any sort of intermediary (*R'Bachya*) and he was fully conscious when God spoke to him (*Sforno*) — like two people conversing with one another.

— בֶּן־נוּן — *Son of Nun*. Although there are other cases in Scripture where the word for son is pronounced *bin* rather than *ben*, it is unusual. *Ramban* offers two suggestions for this usage in connection with Joshua. Since he was Moses' outstanding disciple, the people called him *bin*, to allude to בִּנְהָא [*binah*], *understanding*. Thus, they combined the words *bin Nun* to form the word בֶּן־נוּן, *person of understanding*. Or perhaps the word *bin* was pronounced that way to indicate understanding, and the word *nun*, as found in *Psalms* 72:17, means *greatness*. Thus, Joshua was someone whose under-

standing led to greatness.

נָעַם — A *lad*. Joshua was 56 (or, according to *Seder Olam* — 42) years old, but the Torah calls him a *lad*, because he acted toward Moses as if he were a youthful servant (*Ibn Ezra*), or because it is common in Hebrew for the master to be called a *man* and his subordinate to be called a *lad*, whatever his age (*Ramban*).

לא ימוש — *Would not depart.* Joshua earned the right to be Moses' prime disciple and the one to whom he transmitted his Torah because, from his youth, he gave up every comfort to be in the tent of Torah and thereby he earned a sterling reputation (*Rashi* to *Avos* 1:1).

12-19. Moses pleads for God's nearness. Moses spent

to Moses face to face, as a man would speak with his fellow; then he would return to the camp. His servant, Joshua son of Nun, a lad, would not depart from within the tent.

Moses Pleads for God's Nearness ¹² Moses said to HASHEM, “See, You say to me, ‘Take this people onward,’ but You did not inform me whom You will send with me; and You had said, ‘I shall know you by name, and you have also found favor in My eyes.’ ¹³ And now, if I have indeed found favor in Your eyes, make Your way known to me, so that I may comprehend Your ‘you have found favor in My eyes.’ But see that this nation is Your people.”

¹⁴ He said, “My Presence will go and provide you rest.”

¹⁵ He said to Him, “If Your Presence does not go along, do not bring us forward from here.

¹⁶ How, then, will it be known that I have found favor in Your eyes — I and Your people — unless You accompany us, and I and Your people will be made distinct from every people on the face of the earth!”

¹⁷ HASHEM said to Moses, “Even this thing of which you spoke I shall do, for you have found favor in My eyes, and I have known you by name.”

forty days on Mount Sinai praying that God would restore Israel to its previous state of eminence. He began by asking Him to relent from His decision not to accompany them in the Wilderness but to send an angel in His place; instead, Moses wanted the Divine Presence to remain with the Jews, despite their sin. The commentators offer various interpretations of the often mystical dialogue between God and Moses, but all agree on the general theme: Israel had fallen precipitously from its high spiritual standing, and Moses wanted to restore them as much as possible. Then, he went further and sought to increase his own understanding of God’s essence and ways.

12. ראה — See. As understood by *Rashi*, Moses said that he had failed to understand sufficiently what God had told him, and he did not desire a major aspect of it. God had assigned Moses to lead the people from exile to their land, but did not inform him what form of Heavenly guidance would accompany him. As for God’s statement in verse 2 that He would send an “angel,” Moses contended that this was not the news that he had wanted to hear, for he did not want that inferior form of spiritual accompaniment; he wanted God Himself to be with Israel. He added that God had promised him, *I shall know you by name*, meaning that God had distinguished Moses and elevated him over all other people by means of the intimate relationship God had established with him when He said that He would appear to Moses in the cloud and that Israel would believe in his prophecy forever (19:9). Moses continued his plaint in the next verse, saying that he wanted to know the dimensions of this promise; exactly what did God mean when He said that Moses had *found favor*.

13. הנה ועתה — And now. If it is indeed true that *I have found favor in Your eyes*, then I must ask for more. I do not know the reward that comes with this favor.

וְאֶנְדַע לִמְעֵן — So that *I may comprehend Your . . .* I must understand Your way of bestowing reward so that I will know what You have in store when You tell me, “you have found favor in My eyes.” How do You show this favor? This is the plain meaning of the verse according to *Rashi*. In his commentary to *Berachos* 7a and *Ecclesiastes* 8:17, *Rashi* expounds further

that Moses wanted the answer to the age-old question of why the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper in this world. **וְרָא** — *But see*. Having said that God would show him favor, Moses repeated his earlier insistence that God not destroy Israel and begin a new nation with Moses’ offspring. Therefore he stressed now that *this nation [Israel] is Your people*.

14-15. **פָנִי וְלֹכֶד** — *My Presence will go*. God acceded to Moses’ request, and stated that His Presence, not an angel, would accompany Israel and provide them with security, to which Moses responded (v. 15) by reiterating his contention that unless that were to happen, God should not ask the nation to leave their encampment. *Sforno* comments that Moses preferred to remain in the Wilderness of Sinai rather than enter the Land without God’s Presence, for in that case they would surely be exiles before long. The tragic reality was, that once the people’s sins in the Land caused the *Shechinah* to depart from the Temple, exile was not long in coming.

Ramban finds difficulty with much of *Rashi*’s interpretation, and states that without an understanding of the mysteries of Creation, the dialogue cannot be understood. Briefly, he explains it as follows: Long before the sin of the Golden Calf, Moses had been told that an angel would accompany the people. That did not trouble him because God had said that His Name would reside in that angel (23:20-21). Now Moses wanted to be reassured of two things: (a) that the angel announced in verse 2 would be that same angel, without a diminution of God’s closeness; and (b) since Moses had earned God’s favor, he wanted to know how to achieve greater recognition of His Oneness so that he could attain even greater favor. Moses added that he was making these requests for the sake of Israel, and, after all, *this nation is Your people* (v. 13). God agreed (v. 14) that His Presence would indeed be with the angel, but it would not be as benevolent as Moses had hoped. The angel would represent the Attribute of Judgment, but God would temper His judgment with mercy. Moses appealed again (v. 15), asking that God’s Presence with the angel be one of undiluted mercy, and God acceded to that request, as well.

16. גַּם פְלִינָה — Are made distinct. This is a new request. Moses asked that the Jewish people be placed on a level different

לג / יט – לד / ב

אֲחַזְוִינִי בָּעֵן יְתֵה יְקָרֶה: יְטַנֵּם אָמֵר אֲנָה
 אָעָבָר בְּלֹ יְקָרֶה עַל אֲפִיר וּרְבִיטִי
 בְּשׁוֹם יְיָ קָדְמָה וְאַחֲנָה לְמַאֲן דָּחֹן
 וְאַרְחָם עַל מַן דָּאָרְכָּה: כַּנְאָמֵר לֹא
 תְּכֻלָּה לְמַחְיוֹ יְתֵה אֲפִי אֲרִי לֹא
 יְחַזְוִנִּי אֲנָשָׂא וִתְּקִים: כַּנְאָמֵר יְיָ
 הָא אָתָר מַתְּקוֹן קְרֵמִי וּתְּעַתֵּד עַל
 טְנוּרָא: כַּכְּ וַיְהִי בְּמַעֲבָר קְרֵמִי וְאַשְׁוֹגָה
 בְּבִמְעָרָת טְנוּרָא וְאַגְּנִי בְּכִימָרִי עַל־
 עַד דָּאָעָבָר: כַּכְּ וְאַעֲדִי יְתֵה דְּבָרַת
 יְקָרֶה וְתְּחִוִּי יְתֵה דְּבָתְרִי וְדְקָרְמִי לֹא
 יְתִיחּוֹן: אַנְאָמֵר יְיָ לְמַשָּׁה פְּסָל לֹךְ
 תְּחִרְתְּרִין לְוחֵץ אֲבָנָא בְּקָרְמִיתָא וְאַכְתּוֹב
 עַל לְוחֵץ יְתֵה פְּתַגְמִיאָה דַי הָוּ עַל
 לְוחֵץ אֲבָנָא דַי תְּבָרָתָא: בְּ וְהַוִּי

יט הָרְאָנִי נָא אֶת-בְּבָדָךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֲעֵבֵר בֶּל-טוּבֵיל עַל-פְּנֵיכֶךָ וְקָרָאתִי בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה לְפָנֶיךָ וְחַנְתִּי אֶת-אֲשֶׁר אָחָזָכָ וְרִחְמָתִי אֶת-אֲשֶׁר אָרְחָם: וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַתָּה תָּבוֹל לְרָאָת אֶת-פָּנֵיכֶךָ כִּי לְאִירָאָנִי הָאָדָם וְחַי: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הַנֶּה מָקוֹם אֲתָי וְנִצְבַּת עַל-הָצֹור: וְהִיא בַּעֲבָר בְּבָדֵי וְשִׁמְתֵּר בְּבָבָר בְּנִקְרַת הַצּוֹר וְשִׁפְתֵּתִי כַּפֵּי עַלְיכֶךָ עַד-עֲבָרִי: וְהַסְרָתִי אֶת-

לד חמישית
א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מֵשֶׁה פְּסַל-לִי שְׁנִי-לְחֹת אֲבָנִים
בְּרָא-שָׂנִים וְכַתְבָתִי עַל-הַלְּחֹת אֶת-הַקְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר
בַּהּיו עַל-הַלְּחֹת הַרְאָשָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר שְׁבָרָתִי וַיְהִי

from all other nations; that the Divine Presence in all its holiness, including the higher degrees of prophecy, rest only upon Israel (*Rashi*). In the following verse, God agreed to this request, as well. *Ramban* conjectures that God's acceptance may have come at the end of this forty-day period of prayer [suggesting that Moses advanced steadily along his path of conciliation as his prayers and Israel's remorse found favor with God].

18. Seeing that it was an עת רצון, *time of favor*, Moses was emboldened, as it were, to request an even greater degree of perception than he or any other person had ever experienced (*Ramban*), so that he could understand the full extent of Godliness (*Or HaChaim*), and so that he could grasp how God conveys the flow of His holy influence to every part of the universe (*Sforno*).

According to *Rashbam*, Moses could not have been so presumptuous as to make such a momentous request. Rather, he wanted a sign that God was making a covenant guaranteeing the assurances of the previous verse.

19-23. The limits of Moses' vision. God responded that there were limits to what even the greatest of all prophets could perceive of God's ways. Even the angels, which are

purely spiritual beings, cannot approach the fullness of God's essence; surely it is beyond the capacity of human beings. However, God agreed to show Moses the highest degree of revelation and understanding that man is capable of assimilating. In addition, God taught the most efficacious order of prayer.

19. בְּלַטָּבוֹבִי. — *All My goodness*. The time has come to show you as much Divine goodness as you can comprehend. Specifically, God was about to show Moses the extent of His Attribute of Mercy and how Jews could enlist it in their prayers. In beseeching God to spare the people at the time of the Golden Calf, Moses invoked the Patriarchs, for he thought that only in their merit could there be hope that God would be merciful in the face of great sin. Now, God would show Moses that he was mistaken. He would soon teach Moses the prayer of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy (34:6), which is always available and effective, for though the merit of the Patriarchs may become depleted, God's store of mercy is infinite (*Rashi*).

— וְקַרְאָתִי בְשֵׁם ה' — *And I shall call out with the Name HASHEM.* According to *Rashi*, this was God's promise to teach Moses the Thirteen Attributes, which begin with the Name *HASHEM*.

¹⁸ *He said, “Show me now Your glory.”*

The Limits of Moses' Vision ¹⁹ *He said, “I shall make all My goodness pass before you, and I shall call out with the Name HASHEM before you; I shall show favor when I choose to show favor, and I shall show mercy when I choose to show mercy.”*

²⁰ *He said, “You will not be able to see My face, for no human can see Me and live.”* ²¹ HASHEM said, “Behold! there is a place near Me; you may stand on the rock. ²² When My glory passes by, I shall place you in a cleft of the rock; I shall shield you with My hand until I have passed. ²³ Then I shall remove My hand and you will see My back, but My face may not be seen.”

34

¹ HASHEM said to Moses, “Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones, and I shall inscribe on the Tablets the words that were on the first Tablets, which you shattered. ² Be

Ramban comments that God told Moses that He would allow Moses to hear His Secret Name; Moses would not be able to see it [meaning that the full significance and holiness of the Name is beyond human grasp].

Sforno offers a novel interpretation of the verse. God said he would pass all His goodness before Moses — to which Moses responded, *I shall call out . . .* To “call out” God’s Name is to make His existence and goodness known to others. When Moses proclaimed his intention to do so, God responded that He would show Moses all possible favor and mercy, showering upon him the greatest degree of revelation. Although Moses would not be able to grasp it all (v. 20), that would be because of human limitations, but not because of God’s lack of generosity.

אֲתִ-אָשֵׁר אָחֹן — *When I choose to show favor.* The Sages teach that God shows favor even to people who are undeserving (*Berachos* 7a). God showed Moses all the treasures of reward that were stored for the righteous. Then Moses saw a large, unlabeled storehouse, and he asked whom it was for. God told him that it was reserved for those who did not have their own merits; it was the treasury of Heavenly favor (*Yalkut* 393). Thus God was illustrating to Moses what He had just told him: Even when there are no merits on which Israel can draw, they can still pray for God’s mercy.

כְּנָזֶב — *My face.* This simile refers to a complete and unadulterated perception of God. To achieve this was impossible, but God would allow Moses to see Him from the *back* (v. 23), meaning a vague degree of perception. The distinction between these degrees of vision is like the difference between seeing a person’s face clearly and merely glimpsing him from behind.

כְּנָזֶב — *And live.* In the plain sense of the word, a human being can no more survive a direct confrontation with the glory of God than a person’s eyesight can remain intact if he stares at the sun. To save Moses from harm, God would place him in a cave, a *cleft*, in Mount Sinai, as it were, and shield him from a brilliance that would be more than he could bear. Then, when the degree of revelation was dull enough for him to tolerate, God would permit him to see it.

Or HaChaim comments that even a person who is still spiritually *alive*, i.e., one whose soul has not been contaminated by the temptations of the body, cannot survive the sight of God’s Presence.

23. אַחֲרֵי — *My back.* Rashi cites the Sages that God showed Moses the “knot of His *tefillin*” (*Berachos* 7a). The Talmud there teaches that the passages contained in God’s *tefillin*, as it were, speak of the greatness and uniqueness of the Jewish people, just as the passages in our *tefillin* speak of the greatness and uniqueness of God. Thus, the concept of God’s “*tefillin*” symbolizes His love for His people. The “knot of *tefillin*” that He showed Moses symbolized that He wishes to remain attached to Israel, and by showing it to Moses, He signified His love for him (*R’ Gedaliah Schorr*).

34.

1-4. The Second Tablets. On 29 Av, at the end of Moses’ second forty-day period on Mount Sinai, God agreed to give a second set of Tablets to Israel. This time, however, the stone tablets themselves would not be the handiwork of God; instead, Moses was commanded to carve out the stone cubes and bring them to the mountain, whereupon God would inscribe the commandments on them. This change was a reflection of the lowered status of the nation. The first time, they were completely amenable to God’s will. They had said *עָשָׂה וְעָשָׂה, וְיִשְׁ�ַׁחַת וְיִשְׁמַח*, *We will do and we will hear* (24:7), meaning that they had transformed themselves into instruments of God’s will. Because they had reached an exalted spiritual state in which their bodies, not only their souls, were suffused with Godliness, this was reflected in the physical Tablets, which were fashioned by the hand of God. Now, however, despite their repentance and Moses’ successful prayers, they were no longer on that level. It would be for them to perfect themselves with constant effort to lift themselves back to where they had been — a task that will be completed when we merit the coming of Messiah. Therefore, Moses was commanded to fashion the new Tablets, and God would then inscribe the Ten Commandments on them.

1. וַיֹּאמֶר הָ — HASHEM said. As noted several times in the commentaries on the Torah, the root *אָמַר* as opposed to *דָּבַר* suggests a conciliatory, sympathetic tone. Thus, the manner in which God instructed Moses to prepare the new Tablets shows that Moses had succeeded in gaining forgiveness for Israel’s sin.

אֲשֶׁר שִׁבְرָת — *Which you shattered.* The word *אֲשֶׁר* is related to *אִישָׁר*, *affirmation*; thus God was implying to Moses that he had been justified in breaking the First Tablets (*Shabbos* 87a).

וְמִין לְצַפּרָא וְתַסְקְבַצּרָא לְטוֹרָא דְּסִינִי
וְתַעֲתֵר קְרֵמִי טֶפֶן עַל רִישׁ טוֹרָא;
וְאַנְשָׁלָא יַסְקַע עַמְרָו אַפְּנֵשׁ לְאַיְחָזִי
בְּכָל טוֹרָא אַף עֲנָא וְתוּרִי לְאַיְרָעִין
לְכָל טוֹרָא קְהֻוָה: וְפִסְלֵל תְּרִין לְוַחִי
אַבְנֵיא בְּקְרֵמָא וְאַקְדֵם מְשָׁה בְּצַפּרָא
וְסַלְקֵל טוֹרָא דְּסִינִי בְּמָא דְּפָקֵד יְיָתָה
וְנוֹסֵב בְּיַדְתָה תְּרִין לְוַחִי אַבְנֵיא: הַוְתְּגִלִּי
יְיָ בְּעָנָא וְאַתְעֵטָר עַמָּה טֶפֶן וְקְרָא
בְּשֶׁמֶן דִּין וְאַעֲבֵר יְיָ שְׁבָנָתָה עַל
אַפְוֹהִי וְקָרָא יְיָ אַלְהָא רְחַמָּנָא וְחַנְנָא
מְרַחְיקָן רְגֵן וְמְסִגִּי לְמַעְבָּד טֶבֶן
וְקְשֹׁותָן: נְטַר טִיבָו לְאַלְפִי דְּרִין שְׁבָן
לְעָנָן וְלְמַרוֹד יְלַחְזִין סְלָח לְדְתִיבָן
לְאוֹכִיתָה וְךָלָא תִּבְאַן לְאַמְבוֹן מְרַדִּין וְעַל בְּנֵי
חוּבִי אַבְקָן עַל בְּנֵי מְרַדִּין וְעַל בְּנֵי
בְּנֵין עַל דָּר תְּלִיתִי וְעַל דָּר רְבִיעִים:
עַל-בְּנִים וְעַל-בָּנִי בְּנִים עַל-שְׁלִשִּׁים וְעַל-רְבָעִים:

* רבתיה

רכ"ז

(ב) נבון. מוזמן: (ג) ואיש לא יעללה עמר. קרלהנות על ידי צסוי קומסינה וקולות וקלה צלטוט צדן עין רעה. אין לך יפה מן סליגנותה (פונומול לוי): (ה) והוא קרא המדריסים קהלס עטקה להכניים [ימול נון]: ווקה לא נוקה. וכי פסומו מתמען שלינו בשם ד'. מפוגמיין וקרלה צממל דה': (ו) ד' ד. מדת חמימות היה (פרק ר' ר' ואפקה) קודס ציוחה ולחקת מהחר ציוחה וסוכז (ולאך האבנה יי': אל. לר. ג' ז' מדת חמימות, וכן קולו חומר קלי קלי למא מעזקפני (פסלים כב:כ) והין לו ממדת קדי מה פיזכני. כך מוחטט מכילטת (טיריה ג, טו:ב): ארך אפים. מלהרין אף ו��יע ממכה רציני. נמהה מלה טוֹגה מורהה על הדת פולטינה אהת להחמת מלוק, צדחה טוֹגה
לעט שמול יטה גזואה (פנדאיין קוֹלָה): ורב חסד. נלהיכים חמדת כלין לאס צוֹת

3. ואיש לא-ייעללה — No man may ascend. No one — not even the elders — was permitted to go up the mountain with Moses, nor were the people permitted to congregate at its foot, as they had all done at the first Revelation (*Ramban*). No trait is more desirable than modesty; the First Tablets were subject to the corrosive effects of an “evil eye” because they were given amid great pomp and circumstance (*Rashi*). If so sacred an event as the giving of the Ten Commandments suffered from notoriety, how much more so must one be restrained in ordinary pursuits.

Ramban comments that the solitary nature of Moses’ ascent was to give him honor by making plain that the Second Tablets were being given only thanks to his piety, prayers, and intervention on behalf of Israel.

5-7. שְׁלַשׁ עֲשֶׂרֶת מְרוֹת / God reveals His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. When Moses went up the mountain to receive the Second Tablets, God first showed him how to prevent the sort of national catastrophe that had nearly provoked Him to wipe out the nation. He showed Moses the method and taught him the text of the prayer that would always invoke His mercy. This prayer, the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, is recited in times of crisis when we beseech God to show us mercy: on Yom Kippur, fast days, in times of threatening calamity, and, in Nusach Sefard, every day. It contains thirteen Names and descriptions of God, all of them referring to His compassion in various situations.

5. וַיַּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם הָיָה — And He called out with the Name HASHEM. God called out to Moses, teaching him the manner of prayer (*Ibn Ezra*) as He had promised (33:19)

to do (*Rashbam*).

6. וַיַּעֲבֹר ה' — HASHEM passed. The verse in which God assured Moses that He would teach him this prayer states clearly that God Himself would call out the words: *I* [i. e., God] *shall call out* (33:19). Our verse, too, states that HASHEM Himself passed before Moses, implying that God appeared to Moses and showed him how Jewish supplicants should conduct themselves when they pray. This is the basis of the following homiletic teaching (*Maharal, Be'er HaGolah*): R' Yochanan said, Were it not written in Scripture, it would be impossible [for us] to say it. This [verse] teaches that God wrapped Himself [in a tallis] like one who leads the congregation in prayer, and showed Moses the order of prayer. He said to him, “Whenever Israel sins, let them perform before Me this order [of prayer], and I shall forgive them” (*Rosh Hashanah* 17b). *Maharal* (*ibid.*) explains the significance of being wrapped in a tallis. A tallis around the head blocks out outside distractions and helps one concentrate on one’s prayers. By appearing to Moses that way, God was teaching that when Jews concentrate on their prayers, God will reciprocate by concentrating on fulfilling their requests. Thus, God showed Moses not only the text of the prayers, but the manner in which they should be recited. *Alshich* notes that the Talmud speaks of *performing*, not merely reciting the prayer. This teaches that the key requirement of the Attributes of Mercy is that the Jew who prays must *perform* acts of mercy with others; lip-service is not enough. Only then will God respond by showing the same kind of mercy to His people.

The prepared in the morning; ascend Mount Sinai in the morning and stand by Me there on the Second mountaintop.³ No man may ascend with you nor may anyone be seen on the entire mountain. Tablets Even the flock and the cattle may not graze facing that mountain."

⁴ So he carved out two stone Tablets like the first ones. Moses arose early in the morning and ascended to Mount Sinai, as HASHEM had commanded him, and he took two stone Tablets in his hand.

God Reveals His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy ⁵ HASHEM descended in a cloud and stood with him there, and He called out with the Name HASHEM. ⁶ HASHEM passed before him and proclaimed: HASHEM, HASHEM, God, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to Anger, and Abundant in Kindness and Truth; ⁷ Preserver of Kindness for thousands of generations, Forgiver of Iniquity, Willful Sin, and Error, and Who Cleanses — but does not cleanse completely, recalling the iniquity of parents upon children and grandchildren, to the third and fourth generations.

6-7. There are some disagreements among the commentators regarding how the words and phrases in these two verses should be enumerated as Thirteen Attributes. It should be noted that some of the Attributes may seem to be identical, but the commentators explain that they apply to all sorts of people who have varying degrees of merit to their credit, so that some degrees of mercy apply to the very righteous and some to those less so; some to those who repent out of love for God and some to those who repent out of fear, and so on. We list the Attributes according to the count of *Rabbeinu Tam* (*Rosh Hashanah* 17b s.v. *שלא שורה*), which is followed by most of the major commentators. We also include the explanation of various others:

1. ה' — *HASHEM*. This Name, which denotes mercy, appears twice, because it refers to two different kinds of mercy. The first is that God is merciful before a person sins, even though He knows that future evil lies dormant in the person. *Or HaChaim* adds that God is merciful even to people who, while they may not have committed sins, have not earned His mercy with good deeds.

2. ה' — *HASHEM*. The second mention of this Name denotes that even after someone has sinned, God mercifully accepts his repentance. Without Divine mercy, a sin could not simply disappear from the scales of justice merely because the sinner has repented, just as an assailant cannot free himself from paying for damages merely because he regrets what he did.

3. אל' — *God*. This Name denotes power; in the context of the Attributes, it implies a degree of mercy that surpasses even that indicated by the Name *HASHEM*.

4. רחום — *Compassionate*. God eases the punishment of the guilty and does not put people into extreme temptation. He is compassionate in that He helps people avoid distress.

5. חנוך — *And Gracious*. He is gracious even to the undeserving. He saves people from distress once it has overtaken them.

6. ארך אפים — *Slow to Anger*. With both the righteous and the wicked, God is patient. Instead of punishing sinners immediately, He gives them time to reflect, improve, and repent.

7. ורבי-חֶסֶד — *And Abundant in Kindness*. He is kind even to those who lack personal merits. Also, if one's personal behavior is evenly balanced between virtue and sin, God tips

the scales of judgment toward the good.

8. אמתה — *And Truth*. God never reneges on His word to reward those who serve Him.

9. נצְר חֶסֶד לַאֲלֹהִים — *Preserver of Kindness for thousands of generations*. The *kindness* in this context refers to the good deeds of people, which God regards as if they had done Him kindnesses, even though the Torah requires them to perform such deeds. He *preserves* those deeds for the benefit of their offspring, so that newer, less virtuous generations can be rewarded for the good deeds of their forebears, just as we constantly invoke the merit of the Patriarchs.

[God forgives (אשׁוּ) three categories of sin, and each forgiveness is reckoned as a separate Attribute:]

10. עין — *Iniquity*, i.e., an intentional sin, which God forgives if the sinner repents.

11. עבירה — *Willful Sin*, i.e., a sin that is committed with the intention of angering God. Even so serious a transgression will be forgiven, with repentance.

12. פָּשָׁת — *And Error*, i.e., a sin committed out of apathy or carelessness. This, too, is a sin, because it would not have been done if the perpetrator had truly felt the gravity of defying God's will. For example, one may carelessly discard a match in his driveway, but he would never throw it into his child's crib, even if he thought the chances were very slight that it could start a fire.

13. נזק — *And Who Cleanses*. When someone repents, God *cleanses* his sin, so that the effect of the sin vanishes. However, if one does not repent, נזק, *He does not cleanse*. According to *Sforno*, God cleanses fully those who repent out of love. Those who repent only out of fear of retribution receive only partial cleansing.

The above is how the Sages interpret the phrase so that the first word, *Who Cleanses*, can be reckoned as the final Attribute of Mercy. Our translation follows the plain meaning, which teaches that God does not whitewash sin, for to do so would remove the distinction between good and evil, and would encourage evildoers to feel secure that they can act with impunity, for there will be no retribution.

7. על-שָׁלְשִׁים וְעַל-רַבָּעִים — *To the third and fourth generations*. See notes to 20:5.

But if God does not punish for sins more than four generations into the future, why did He say that He would inflict

ח וואוחי משה וכרע על ארעה וסיה
ט ואמר אם בען אשכחית רחמיון גדרקע
יי תחק בען שכנתא דרי בייננא ארי עט
קשי קבל הו ותשבוק לחובנא
ולחטא תנא ותחסננא. ואמר הא אנה
גער קים לקלבל כל עטך עבר פרישן די
לא אתחבראו בכל ארעה ובכל עטמעא
ויעזין כל עטמא די את בינהון ית עזרא
ונני ארי דחיל הו די אנה עבר ערפה
יא טר לך ית די אנה מפקד לך יומא דין
הא אנה מתריך מן גדרקע ית אמוראי
ובגענאי וחתאי ופרראי וחנאוי ויבושאי
יב אסתפר לך דילמא תנור קים ליטב
ארעה די את עלל עללה דילמא יהיו
לתקלא בינה: «ארי ית אגוריון
תרעון יית קמתהון תפברון וית
אשרהון קצצון: יא ארי לא תסוד
לטענות עטמיא ארי יי קנא שמה אל
קנא הו: טו דילמא תנור קים ליטב
ארעה ויטען בתר טענותהון וירבחון
לטענותהון וירקון לך ותיכול
מדביחו: טו ותשב מנגמיהון לבניה וגענו
ויטען בטהון בתר טענותהון ויטען ית
ביך בתר טענותהון: ז דחלא דמתבא
לא מעבד לך: יה ית חגא דפטירא טער
שבעא יומין תיכול פטירה במא די
פדרתך למן ירחא דאבי בא נפקתא ממץרים:
בירחה דאבי בא נפקתא ממץרים:

ח-ט **וימחר משה ניקד הארץ נישתחה:** נאמר אס-נָא
מצאת הין בעיניך אדני יLER-NA אדני בקרבנו כי עט-
קשה-עלך הוא וסלחת לעוננו ולחטאינו ונחלתנו:
שי נאמר הנה אנכי כרת ברית נגד כל-עמך אעשה
נפלאות אשר לא-נבראו בכל-הארץ ובכל-הגויים
וראה כל-העם אשר אתה בקרבו את-מעשה יהוה
***בראש עמודו ביה שמי יא כי-נורא הוא אשר אני עשה עטך: שמר-ליך את אשר**
אנכי מצוך היום הנני גרש מפניך את-הأمורי והכנען
יב והחתי והפרזי והחמי והיבוסי: השמר לך פניתברת
ברית לישב הארץ אשר אתה בא עלייה פוזיה
יג למוקש בקרבך: כי את-מזבחותם תתען ואת-מצבתם
יד תשברון ואת-אשריו תברחות: כי לא תשתחוה לאל
ה-רבתי טו אחר כי יהוה קנאשמו אל קנא הוא: פניתברת ברית
ליישב הארץ גענו ואחרי אליהם וובהו לאלהיהם
טו וקרא לך ואכלת מזבחו: ולקחת מבניו לך נוןו
בנתיו אחריו אלהין והזנו את-בניך אחרי אל-היהם:
ז' יה אל-הי מסכה לא תעשה-ליך: את-חג המצות
תשמר שבעת ימים תאכל מצות אשר צויתך למועד
חדש האביב כי בחודש האביב יצאת ממץרים:

ט' סול קומו נוגח חס לגלפים (טוספת סוטה ד':ח) וימחר משה. צבילה מה
כלינה טורכת ובעת קול קרא לה, מיד וצקהו: (ט) יLER נא ה' בקרבנו. כמו
סמכתק, סמלchar שלטה נטה טו, וטס עט קשה עורף הוא ומילדו צך ומליכת על
וסת פן הכלך זדרך (לעיל גג:ג) מה תסלח לעוניינו וגוו. ט' כי גמוקס לה:
מקהו לאפרע וטויו מוערכ. וטה כל בון קלה, להו צנמונו ופלוט מעוזיו: (טו)
ונחלתנו. ותתנו לך נחלה וס"ה ספקן לנו נחלה מיוקדה. זו כתל צקפת ונפלטו לוי
ועמך (פס פסוק טז) סלה פאלה זכינך על טהרותם (ברכות ז':ו) ו/or בורת ברית.

part of the punishment that was due for the sin of the Golden Calf even after the passage of many generations (see 32:34)? The sin of the Calf was so grievous that even after a delay of four generations, the punishment would have been very severe. To avoid this, God made an exception and spread it out over all of history (*Kitzur Mizrachi*).

According to R' Bachya, God does not *punish* for the Golden Calf; He only *remembers* it, so that the degree of His mercy is diminished from what it would otherwise have been.

8-10. Moses' request.

8. — **וימחר משה** — Moses hastened. As soon as he perceived the approach of God's Presence — before he heard the above order of prayer — Moses hastened to bow, in token of his complete subjugation to God (*Rashi, Sforso*).

9. — **ילר-נא אדני** — Let my Lord go. Since God had already

agreed to accompany the nation (33:17), why did Moses repeat this request? And why did he justify his plea on the ground that the people were stiff-necked, when it was precisely because of their stubbornness that God had said that it was dangerous for Him to be with them (33:3)? Once God had set forth the immensity of His mercies, Moses argued that only God had the capacity to forgive their sins (*Rashi*). Earlier, when God was angry with the people, it was dangerous for Him to be with them, but now that He had forgiven them, He would show more mercy than an angel (*Ramban*).

Or HaChaim notes that here, for the only time in the entire exchange, Moses refers to God as *my Lord*, instead of *HASHEM*. Having heard the incredible extent of God's mercy, Moses was afraid. A *stiff-necked* people is prone to sin, and if it is forgiven too easily because of God's mercy, it might be tempted to sin excessively. Therefore, Moses asked for God's

Moses' Request ⁸ Moses hastened to bow his head toward the ground and prostrate himself. ⁹ He said, "If I have now found favor in Your eyes, my Lord, let my Lord go among us — for it is a stiff-necked people, and You shall forgive our iniquity and our error, and make us Your heritage."

¹⁰ He said, "Behold! I seal a covenant: Before your entire people I shall make distinctions such as have never been created in the entire world and among all the nations; and the entire people among whom you are will see the work of HASHEM — which is awesome — that I am about to do with you.

Safeguarding the Promise ¹¹ "Beware of what I command you today: Behold I drive out before you the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivvite, and the Jebusite. ¹² Be vigilant lest you seal a covenant with the inhabitant of the land to which you come, lest it be a snare among you.

¹³ Rather you shall break apart their altars, smash their pillars, and cut down its sacred trees.

¹⁴ For you shall not prostrate yourselves to an alien god, for the very Name of HASHEM is 'Jealous One,' He is a jealous God. ¹⁵ Lest you seal a covenant with the inhabitant of the land and stray after their gods, slaughter to their gods, and he invite you and you eat from his slaughter. ¹⁶ And you take their daughters for your sons, and their daughters stray after their gods and entice your sons to stray after their gods!

¹⁷ "You shall not make for yourselves molten gods.

¹⁸ "You shall observe the Festival of Matzos: For a seven-day period you shall eat matzos, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of spring, for in the month of spring you went forth from Egypt.

Lordship, which indicates strength and judgment, for he wanted a mixture of judgment and mercy.

וְנַחֲלָנוּ — *And make us Your heritage.* Moses rephrased his request of 33:16, that God make Israel uniquely His own, by not resting His Presence upon any other nation (*Rashi*).

The next verse clarifies why Moses repeated a request that he had made before and that God had accepted. God answered that He would ratify Israel's special status by sealing a *covenant* to that effect. Thus, it was the covenant that Moses now sought and received (*Oznaim LaTorah*).

10. נִפְלָאת — *Distinctions.* The word cannot mean *wonders*, as it usually does, because the future history of the nation did not show greater miracles than God had done in Egypt and at the Sea of Reeds (*Ramban*). Rather, God refers to the distinguished status that He will give to the entire nation (*Rashi*), or to Moses, who would be recognized as the one with whom God has a special relationship (*Ramban*).

11-26. Safeguarding the promise. Despite the promises and the covenant, Israel would jeopardize its position if it were to sin and thereby break its part of the covenant. In this passage, God tells Moses what sins are particularly threatening and what commandments are especially propitious for safeguarding Israel's spiritual greatness. He begins by reiterating His promise to drive out the Canaanite nations, but then cautions Israel that it must avoid the temptations that would await them in the Land.

The passage begins *Beware of what I command you today*, meaning that God was emphasizing that the people must not disregard everything that He had commanded them earlier by serving idols, as they had done by worshiping the *Eigel*. The passage concerning idolatry ends *You shall not make yourselves molten gods* (v. 17), which is an allusion to the

molten Golden Calf, as if to emphasize that not even for "pure motives" — such as the need for a "leader" — dare they repeat their earlier catastrophic mistake (*Ramban*).

12. לְמֹקֵשׁ — *A snare.* To seek peace with the natives of Canaan would be natural for the descendants of the Patriarchs, a nation with a legacy of peace and kindness, and it would seem incomprehensible to them that they would be led astray by the Canaanite nations that were notorious for their debauchery and corruption. Could Israel be seduced by such peoples? Here God warns them that not only could they, they *would*. And such was the experience of succeeding Jewish generations in *Eretz Yisrael* that failed to expel the Canaanites.

The snare could take either of the two forms described in verses 15-16. Either the Jews would experiment with idolatry, or they would be tempted by the women of the land (*Sforno*).

14. קָנָא — *Jealous One.* See 20:5.

15. פָּנִיתְכְּרִת בְּרִית — *Lest you seal a covenant.* The Torah now explains the reasons for the prohibition given in verse 12.

According to *Or HaChaim*, the Torah is making a new point. After having destroyed all their idols, as set forth above, you might be ready to seal a covenant with the Canaanites on the basis of their willingness to renounce idol worship and accept the seven Noachide laws. This too is forbidden, for the inevitable result will be your spiritual downfall.

וְאֶבְלָתְ מַזְבֵּחַ — *And you eat from his slaughter.* He will invite you socially and serve you kosher food, but I will reckon it as if you had worshiped his idol, because the result will be that you will be drawn to his way of life and even intermarriage

ט. כל פתח נלדא דילוי וכל בעייר תקדרש
דכرين בדור תור ואמר: כ ובכרא
רכח מריא תפירוק באמרא ואם לא תפירוק
וותנתקפה כל בוכרא דבניך תפירוק ולא
יתיחזוון קדרמי ריקניין: כא שטא יומין
תפלח ובוינמא שביעאה תנוח בזועעא
ובבחצרא תנוח: כב וחגא דשביעיא תעבד
ללהר בכורי חעד חטיין וחגא דכנשא
במפעקא דשתא: כג תלת זמנין בשטא
יתיחזוון כל דכונייר גדים רבונן עלמא יי
אללה רישראל: כ ארי אתריך עממן מון
קדרמך ואפתמיית תהיךן ולא יחמד אנש
נית אערעה במסקר לאתחזאה גדים יי
אללהר תלת זמנין בשטא: כה לא תכוס
על חמיע דם פסחי ולא יביתון לצברא
בר מפְּדַבָּחָא תרבי וכsett חגא דפסחא:
כו ריש בכורי ארעער תניית לבייט מקרשא
דיי אלהר לא תיכלוןبشر בחלב:

יט-כ בְּלִ פָטֵר רַחֲם לֵי וּכְלִ מִקְנֶה תֹּזֵכֶר פָטֵר שׂוֹר וְשָׁה: וּפָטֵר
חַמּוֹר תִּפְדֵּה בְּשָׁה וְאַסְ-לָא תִּפְדֵּה וּעֲרֵפְתָּו כֶּל בְּכוֹר
כָּא בְּנֵיל תִּפְדֵּה וְלֹא-יָרָאו פְנֵי רַיקָם: שְׁשָׁת יָמִים מַעֲבֵד
כָּבְבִּיּוֹם הַשְׁבִּיעִי תִּשְׁבַּת בְּחִרְישׁ וּבְקָצֵיר תִּשְׁבַּת: וְחַג
שְׁבָעָת מַעֲשָׂה לְבָכּוֹרִי קָצֵיר חֲטִים וְחַג הַאֲסִיף
כָּג תִּקְוֹפַת הַשָּׁנָה: שֶׁלַשׁ פָעָמִים בְּשָׁנָה יְרָאָה בְּלִ-זְכוּרָה
כְּדֵ אַת-פְנֵי הָאָרוֹן וַיְהִי אֶלְيִי יִשְׂרָאֵל: בְּיַ-אֲוֹרִישׁ גּוֹיִם
מִפְנֵיךְ וְהַרְחַבְתִּי אֶת-גְּבָלָךְ וְלֹא-יִחְמֹד אִישׁ אֶת-אֶרְצָךְ
בְּעַלְתָּךְ לְרֹאֹות אֶת-פְנֵי יְהֹוָה אֶלְיִהּוּ שֶׁלַשׁ פָעָמִים
בְּשָׁנָה: לְאַתְשִׁיחַת עַל-חַמִּץ דְּסִזְבָּחִי וְלֹא-יַלְיוֹן לְבָקָר
טו זְבַח חַג הַפְּסָחָה: רְאִשְׁת בְּכוֹרִי אֶדְמָתָךְ תְּבִיא בֵּית יְהֹוָה
אֶלְיִהּוּ לְאַתְבָּשֵׁל גָּדוּ בְּחֶלֶב אָמוֹן:

(כב) בכוורי קצ'יר חתימים. סלהה מחייב או סמי חלקה מחייב: בכורי. סמי מחייבה לרוכינה הצעלה מן מהדר כל חטף למקודם, כי מינחה בטומר כל בפסח מן עצמותים פון (מנחות פר): וזה האסיך. צומן סלהה הוסף תבוקדק מן השדה לצייה. קצ'יר ו' הצעלה נצ'יר, כמו והקפטנו לו' קוין' בז'ין (ונשים כב':) תקופת השנה.

טיטומי צהום קעננה, תחלף אבנה סבנה סבנה תקופת. לבון מס'יב' וגקפפה: (כג) כל טבורך. כל זיכרים עזין. לרעה מזות קוראנו נלמרו ונכפלו, ייך מטהן כל פטעים קהילרכבד, קהיע' ולמענו טל מין להוין צבאס ועל מנין נסחה צבאס: (כד) אוריש.

כברגנוווע, קהיריך. וכן היל דס (ודרים ג'ה) וכן יודעך קה קהומרי (זמנדר כה'ג:)' גיריזוין: והרחבותי את גבלן. ומפה רחוק מצעי גאניה ווינ' יכל לדוחות לפאי גאניה, אך hei קווען נך זיגיס קלונ' (כח) לא תשחת וגוי. נך פשטת קה סאמפק וועל'ן קמן קיס. מואכסה דוחוט לו זויניך לו לתקה מני קהצ'ורא (פסחים סג:)

אלילין. כפראגנוווע. להן נינ' מועלם כלס צמזהה (מכיליקת כב'ג:) קין נינ' גולן כגעמוד סטער וטידיס: (כו) ראשית בכורי אדרמתך. מצעמיה סמיין תלמודיס צבאה קהילנדס וטידיס: (כו) רחוב חוג הפסח. להוציא. וכמלון להה מל'ה מל'ה כל הקטול צב'זילוס הנ'ג: לא תבשל גדי. הואסxa נצ'יר נחלה. וטלס פטעים כטוד צ'וורה, ה' לילכללה וו' לאסחה וו' ליט'סxo צ'יס'ו (חוילין קטו): גדי. כל ולד דס צמ'טט וו' מג'ל. ומה סואו'ן נפרך צכממה מקומות גדי' טויס (זכריה' לת'י, וווע) (למלה' סגד') סטס כל יונקיס ממכם (וואלי' קיגן): בחלהב אמרו. פרט נטפו דהון' לו חלה' הס, אהון'

(Rashi from Avodah Zarah 8a). Ramban interprets that they will invite you to eat from a sacrifice to an idol.

18-26. To avoid a future downfall. Having exhorted the people to avoid idolatry or anything that could lead them in that direction, the Torah presents a list of commandments that can help prevent such disasters as the Golden Calf. These commandments include the pilgrimage festivals and other observances that are reminders of the Exodus from Egypt, the momentous event that proved that God created and controls the universe and, consequently, that there is no need or justification for seeking substitutes for Him or intermediaries to Him. Indeed, when King Jeroboam set up his secessionist monarchy of the Ten Tribes after the death of King Solomon, and wanted to prevent the Jews of his kingdom from traveling to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage festivals —

כפיו, רקתוורה מתכרכרת בס"ח מזכוכיתן צבוסלה: (יט) כל פטר רחם לי. גולדס: ובכל מוקן לך צור כפstral דוכ ובה, להדר פיטור זכר קת' מהמה: פטר. לeson פטיהה, וכן פטור מיס לרשתם מדור (מקלי י"ז). תי' כל צור לפון נקבה יתיה, מוטט על זולדגה: (ב) ובפטר חמוץ. ולע' חל' צבמא טהרה (צבאות): פטרת ה' בשרה. וונן שא לככן ואחות חולין ציד כבן, וכפר חומו מותר צבודס לבנלים (פס ט): וערפתו. ערפו קזופין. טוח' לפסיד ממון כבן לפיק' יופס ממוינו (מכילאה פסקה י"ח, גיגין; צבאות י"ג: כל בדור בדור תפדרה. חמתה סלעים פדיינו ק' גודו, שנאורה ופדוו מון' חדים קפדה גו' (מדבדר יהטנו): וליא' ראו פון ריקם. לפ' פטואן כל מקהל דצ' צפוי טהמו סוח' וחונו מוטט עיל' נטול, בלחן במנת צchor לרהי'יט פnis. הלוך נאכלת הילכת סיח, וכחסטלנו נלגל נלחות לוי' ולו' פין י'יקס, מונח נעלס לא-צ'יטה טלה דליהק פינס (חגיגן ג'). ולמי מדליך צריישן, מקרת' ייכ' סוח' ומונח נגלהה סוח', לנמד על סטנקוטן כל מעד' עדבי סאות' חמוץ סלאעים מל' מין ומין כפדיין צכה, צמכליה קזונין (ג'): (בא) בחריש ובקצ'ר תשבות. כמה נאל' חיריכ' וק'ויל'. יט' מרגז'יווי' הוורמיס עעל' חיריכ' כל מעד' צביעית הנכסם לבק'יטים וק'ויל' כל צביעית סיוניה למונ'ה צביעית, לממך צמוייספין محل' על' רקץ. וכן' מכםעו, צבק' יmis פטוד' וצ'ויס צב' צב'יעית, ונמוך' צב' צב'ו, ונדוד' ו' ק'ים ספקת'ים וכק'ויל' האסכו. והן' זוך' לומר חיריכ' וק'ויל' כל צב' צב'יעית זאל' צב' צב'ק, וחריכ' וק'ויל' ספקוח' צו' לו'מר' לך' מ' מה חיריכ' רשות ק' ק'יל' רצ'ות, ו'ק' ק'יל' סטומע צב'ויה מ'�ה ודוחה' ה'ת' קבצת' ור'ת' ה'בנה ט'; מכות ה':

where they would be reminded that the House of David was the legitimate ruler — he set up golden statues of calves in his kingdom and established his own festivals for their worship (*1 Kings* 12:28). He realized, as our passage suggests, that observance of the festivals are the road to faith in God. So, too, is the Sabbath, which bears testimony that God created heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh.

Ramban notes a similarity between this passage, which was in conjunction with the giving of the Second Tablets, and the one that followed the giving of the Ten Commandments (23:17). In both cases, the Torah first warned against idol worship, and then taught that a Jew's desire to serve God should be channeled into the pilgrimage festivals.

Sforno contends that this passage stresses the agricultural

¹⁹ “Every first issue of a womb is Mine; as well as any of your livestock that produces a male, the first issue of an ox or a sheep. ²⁰ The first issue of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb or kid, and if you do not redeem it you shall axe the back of its neck. You shall redeem every firstborn of your sons. They shall not appear before Me empty-handed.

²¹ “Six days shall you work and on the seventh day you shall desist; you shall desist from plowing and harvesting. ²² You shall make the Festival of Weeks with the first offering of the wheat harvest; and the Festival of the Harvest shall be at the changing of the year. ²³ Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord HASHEM, the God of Israel. ²⁴ For I shall banish nations before you and broaden your boundary; no man will covet your land when you go up to appear before HASHEM, your God, three times a year.

²⁵ “You shall not slaughter My blood-offering while in the possession of leavened food, nor may the feast-offering of the Pesach Festival be left overnight until morning. ²⁶ The first of your land’s early produce you shall bring to the Temple of HASHEM, your God. Do not cook a kid in its mother’s milk.”

aspect of the festivals and the related commandments. The message is that the road to material success and prosperity is through service of God, not a frantic search for omens and intermediaries.

19. בְּלִפְטָר רַחֲם לֵי. — Every first issue of a womb is Mine. See 13:2, 12-13. No miracle was greater proof of God’s involvement in the most minute affairs of this world than His pinpoint selection of the Egyptian firstborn. *Sforno*, following the theme cited above, comments that only by dedicating one’s first taste of prosperity to God, as in this verse and verse 26, can one be assured of success.

It is a great privilege to be a firstborn. God Himself is the Firstborn of the world, as it were; the sacrificial service was originally performed by the firstborn and Jacob went to great lengths to procure the birthright from Esau. Even though the Kohanim and Levites replaced the firstborn in the aftermath of the Golden Calf, it is a high honor to be a firstborn. The Sages teach that the reason this commandment is mentioned in conjunction with the festivals is because firstborn who have been redeemed can receive God’s Presence and see the rebuilt Temple (*R’ Bachya*).

20. וְלَا יִרְאֶו פְנֵי רִיקָם. — They shall not appear before Me empty-handed. This commandment refers back to the Pilgrimage Festivals. When Jews come to the Temple, they must bring an *tzavat razah*, elevation-offering of appearance, in honor of the occasion (*Rashi* from *Chagigah* 7a).

21. בְּחִרֵשׁ וּבְקִצְרִיר. — From plowing and harvesting. In its plain sense, the verse singles out these two labors because they are essential to one’s livelihood; when it is time for either, not a moment can be wasted lest the weather or other conditions change and cause considerable losses. Nevertheless, the laws of the Sabbath outweigh all considerations, for only God gives prosperity (*Ramban*). The Sages derive exegetically that this phrase refers to the Sabbatical Year, teaching that one must not plow just before or harvest just after that year (*Rashi*).

22. בְּכֹרִי קָצֵר חַטִים. — The first offering of your wheat harvest. On Shavuos — known as the Festival of Weeks because the Torah gives its date only as seven weeks after the second day

of Pesach — the first Temple offering from the new wheat crop is offered.

תְּקִופַת הַשָּׁנָה — At the changing of the year. Succos, when the harvest is gathered in from the fields, comes at the beginning of the new year.

23. See 23:17.

24. כִּי־אָזְרִישׁ גָּוִים. — For I shall banish nations . . . It is necessary for you to have set times of the year to come to Jerusalem, because you will be spread out in the Land after the conquest of the Land, and in the normal course of events many of you would never be exposed to the holiness of the Temple (*Rashi*).

This is a blessing. You will not have the unpleasant experience of facing those who hate you, because God will drive them away (*Or HaChaim*).

וְלֹא־יִחַם אִישׁ — No man will covet. This is one of the great hidden miracles of the Torah. There is no other way that a vast territory can be left undefended and virtually unpopulated without inviting the aggression of alien predators.

25. See 23:18. The reason the Torah repeats these commandments here may be because leavening symbolizes excess and vanity — the idea that one ignores one’s essence and becomes bloated (*Maharal*) — and therefore the avoidance of such characteristics in the service of God is an important means of safeguarding oneself from sin. The limitation on how long one may eat sacrificial meat and offer its fats on the Altar suggests the concept that “religion” is whatever the Torah commands, not any observance that one may devise and idealize as a means to come closer to a self-defined spirituality. As *Rashi* comments to Amos 4:4, the priests of Baal would seek to entice Jews by claiming that their religion is less restrictive than Judaism, in that it permits its adherents much more leeway in when to complete their sacrificial service. Judaism does not don a cloak of permissiveness; its glory is that it is the word of God.

26. רָאשִׁית בְּכֹרִי אַדְמַתְךָ — The first of your land’s early produce. This is the commandment to bring the first fruits to the Temple; see *Deuteronomy* 26:1-11. The Torah climaxes this list of commandments with two expressions of a central

ושביעי זו ואמר יי' למשה כתוב לך ית פתגמיא האלין ארי על מיר פרגמיא האלי גורית עמר קום ועם ישראלי: כה נהנו מפני עם יי' ארבעין ים מים וארכעין לא אלן לא אבל ומיא לא שני כתוב על לוחיא ית פתגמי קימאי עשריא פתגמיא: כת ונהנה בר נחת משה בירא רמשה במתחה מן טורא ומשה לא ידע ארי סגי זיו יקראי דאפויה ישראלי ית משה והא סגי זיו יקראי במלולותה עמה: שנחנא אהרן ובני ישראלי רוחילו מלאתקרבא לותה: דאפויה ורחילו לותה אהרן לא וקרא להונ משה ותבו לותה אהרן וכל רבכיא בכנסטה ומילל משה לעתחוין: ובתרן בון אתקריבו כל בני ישראל ופקרון ית בל די מליל עימה בטורא דסיני: וושיציו משה מלמללא עומחוין ויחב על אפויה בית אפי: לא וכבר עכל משה לדורם יי' למלא עמה מעדי ית בית אפויה עד מפקה נפק ומילל עס בוני ישראלי ית די מתחפרק: לה וחוזן לה אשר יצונה: וראו בני ישראל את פנוי משה עזר פנוי משה והשיב משה את המסוח על פניו עד באו לדבר אותו: סס קליט פסוקים. חננא'ל סימן.

שבייע זו ויאמר יהוה אל-משה כתוב לך את הדברים האלה כי על-פי הדברים האלה ברתי אתך ברית ואת-ישראל: כה ויהי שם עם יהוה ארבעים יום וארבעים לילה לחם לא אבל ומים לא שתה ניכתב על-הלהחת את דברי כת הברית עשרה הדברים: ויהי ברדת משה מהר סיני ושני לחת העדרת ביד-משה ברדתו מנ-ההר ומשה לא ידע כי קרבן עור פניו בדרכו אותו: ונירא אהרן וכל-בני ישראל את-משה והנה קרבן עור פניו וייראו לא מגש אלי: ויקרא אליהם משה וישבו אליו אהרן לב וכל-הנסאים בעדרה וידבר משה אליהם: ואחריכן נגשו כל-בני ישראל ויצום את כל-אשר דבר יהוה לא אותו בהר סיני: ויכל משה מדבר אתם ויתן על-פניו לד מסוחה: ובבאה משה לפנוי יהוה לדבר אותו יסיר את-המסוחה עד-צאתו ויצא ודבר אל-בני ישראל את מה שצאתו ויצא ודבר אלה בירא זיו יקראי דאפויה עט בוני ישראלי ית די מתחפרק: לה וחוזן לה אשר יצונה: וראו בני ישראל את-פנוי משה כי קרבן עזר פנוי משה והשיב משה את-המסוחה על-פניו עד באו לדבר אותו: סס קליט פסוקים. חננא'ל סימן.

רכ"ז

לוסטו מ"ה לנו מדרדי קופלים (סס קיג): (בז) את הדברים האלה. ולמ' מה רשיי לכתוב מורה צבע"פ (גיטין ס): (כט) ויהי ברדת משה. כבאיין לוחות חלונות צויס הכהנים: בירן. וכן קליסים (מלוי לו (חצוק גד)) זאהו מטיק וצונט מאני קרן. ומיטין וכח מצה לקליז סוח, רצוטינו חמורן קמנפה, זטן פק"ס יוו מל פנוי, צנלא' וצונט כפי ולעל לג'כ; פחמוול לח' (ל) וויראו צלחה, ציד האבן לרעננה וכו' כל הילען צמירוץן (נד): (לג) וויתן על פניו משות אלין. צ' ווילח כמה גдол כהה צל עצילה. צעד צל פטו צני ידים כטבאות (פ). הוה קלח מוסוה נלהפה, לזרן גטטה, טיס מטאכל באה. קף כלון, מוסה, צעבילה מסה לומה, ומולחה כבוד כ' כל' חילכת בראחים האר לטמיי טכלל גנד צב'ו, ולת' יהויס ולת' מזועט. ומצבעו אה' גאנגל אף מקרלי סודו צל מסה קו מלקייעס ומיזועט (ספ' זט' אה'): (לא) הנשאים בעדרה. כמו וויתן קמסוק ננדן, וויטלו צבעה קאה מדער עס טראלה, וצבעה צהמקום נדער צ'יל' קעדזה: וידבר משה אליהם. צליוחטו כל מוקס, ולבון הווא זוון כל פעין זהה: (לב) ואחרי בן גגשו. החר צלמוד מזקיס חוק ומלמעה פרחא זו ה' הכללה יטראלה. תנו רצון, צילד סדר נמאנה, מסה סי' לומד מפי הגולה. נכם ה'גלה,

theme: Success and prosperity depend on God's blessing. Therefore, one should devote the very beginning of material blessing — the first fruits — to God. Secondly, the ancient heathens would cook meat in milk as a charm for success [see 23:19 for notes on this law]. Therefore the Torah concludes with a command not to fall into that spurious trap (*Sforno*).

27-35. Renewal of the covenant. Since the Jewish people had abrogated the covenant by creating the Golden Calf,

God instructed Moses to write a new covenant, which the people would accept, as they had accepted the original one by saying, "We will do and we will hear," and God would ratify it in the form of a promise not to destroy them (*Ramban*). God taught Moses the entire Torah anew and gave him the Second Tablets. A further result of the nation's fall from its earlier spiritual plateau was that they could not tolerate the holy glow that shone from Moses' face as a result of his new exposure to God's glory.

Renewal of the Covenant ²⁷ HASHEM said to Moses, “Write these words for yourself, for according to these words have I sealed a covenant with you and Israel.” ²⁸ He remained there with HASHEM for forty days and forty nights — he did not eat bread and he did not drink water — and He wrote on the Tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

The Radiance of Moses ²⁹ When Moses descended from Mount Sinai — with the two Tablets of the Testimony in the hand of Moses as he descended from the mountain — Moses did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant when He had spoken to him. ³⁰ Aaron and all the Children of Israel saw Moses, and behold! — the skin of his face had become radiant; and they feared to approach him. ³¹ Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the assembly returned to him, and Moses would speak to them. ³² After that, all the Children of Israel would approach; he would command them regarding everything that HASHEM had spoken to him on Mount Sinai.

³³ Moses finished speaking with them and placed a mask on his face. ³⁴ When Moses would come before HASHEM to speak with Him, he would remove the mask until his departure; then he would leave and tell the Children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. ³⁵ When the Children of Israel saw Moses’ face, that the skin of Moses’ face had become radiant, Moses put the mask back on his face, until he came to speak with Him.

28. *לְחֵם וּמַיִם* — Bread . . . and water. Rather than saying simply that Moses neither ate nor drank, the verse specifies bread and water to imply that it was only *physical* food that Moses did not enjoy. There was, however, a more significant nourishment that Moses *did* absorb: the word of God (*Or HaChaim*).

29. *בַּיָּקָרֶן* — Had become radiant. The radiance resulted from the Divine hand with which God had sheltered Moses (33:22) when He showed him a glimpse of His glory (*Rashi*). According to *Zohar Chadash* (62:2), Moses merited this manifestation of favor because he defended Israel against God’s wrath — so much does God value those who speak well of His people! (*Be’er Moshe*).

30. *וַיַּירְאוּ מֹשֶׁת אֱלֹהִים* — And they feared to approach him. Come and see how great is the power of sin. Until they extended their hand in sin [by worshiping the *Eigel*], what does [the Torah] say? The appearance of the glory of HASHEM was like a consuming fire on the mountaintop **before the eyes** of the Children of Israel (24:17), but they neither feared nor trembled. But from the time when they made the *Eigel*, they shivered and trembled even before the rays of glory of Moses! (*Rashi* from *Sifri*, *Nasso* 1).

31-32. These verses contain the sequence of Moses’ teaching. First he taught Aaron what God had commanded him. Then Aaron would be seated at his left, and Aaron’s sons would enter. After Moses taught it to them, they would be seated flanking Moses and Aaron, and Moses would teach the elders. Then they would be seated at the sides and the people would come to hear the teaching (*Rashi*).

33. *וַיִּתְנַצֵּל פְּנֵיו מִסְוָה* — And placed a mask on his face. Moses wore the mask to spare the people the embarrassment of seeing how they had so deprived themselves of closeness to God that they could not even look at his prophet (*Be’er Moshe*).

35. When Moses taught the word of God to the people, he did not wear the mask, so that nothing would interpose between God’s teaching and the people of Israel. Then, he would put the mask back on and wear it until God spoke to him again.

כָּל־טַפְסּוּקִים חֲנָנָא לְסִוְמָן. — This Masoretic note means: There are 139 verses in the *Sidrah*, numerically corresponding to the mnemonic *לְסִוְמָן*.

The word *חֲנָנָא* alludes to the graciousness He displayed in forgiving Israel for the sin of the Golden Calf (*R’ David Feinstein*).

אונקלוס

וּמְלִילֵי יְהֹוָה עִם מֹשֶׁה וְעַמְּךָרְן
לְמִימְרָה: בְּרוּא גּוֹרָת אָוֹתִיתָא דִּי פְּקִיד
יְהֹוָה לְמִימְרָה מַלְלָעַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וִיסְבּוֹן
לְךָ תּוֹרְתָּא סְמוֹקְטָא שְׁלִמְפָתָא דִּי לִית
בָּהּ מוֹמָא דִי לֹא סְלִיק עַלְהָ נִירָא:
וְתַחַנוּן יְתָה לְאָלָעָר בְּהָנָא וַיַּפְקִיד יְתָה
לְמִבְּרָא לְמִשְׁרִיתָא וַיְכֹס יְתָה גָּדְמָוָה
וַיַּסְבֵּב אָלָעָר בְּהָנָא מִדְמָה בְּאַצְבָּעָה
וַיַּדְרֵי לְקַבֵּל אֲפִי מִשְׁכָּן זְמָנָא מִדְמָה
שְׁבֻע וּמִנְיָן: הַוַּיּוֹקֵד יְתָה תּוֹרָתָא לְעַיּוֹנִי
בֵּית מִשְׁבָּה וִיתָה בְּשָׁרָה וִיתָה דְמָה עַל
אֲכָלָה יוֹקֵד: וַיַּסְבֵּב בְּהָנָא אַעֲדָרָזָא
וְאוֹזָבָא וְצַבָּע זְהֹרִי וְרַמְּמִי לְגֹן יְקָרָת
תוֹרָתָא: וְצַבָּע לְבּוֹשָׂוִה בְּהָנָא
וַיַּסְחַי בְּשָׁרָה בְּמִינָא וּכְתָר בְּן יְיֻוּל
לְמִשְׁרִיתָא וְיהִי מְסָבָב בְּהָנָא עד
בְּמִשְׁא: הַוַּיּוֹקֵד יְתָה יְצַבָּע לְבּוֹשָׂוִה
וְטָמָא הַבְּהָן עַד הָעָרָב. סְלִיסָו וְלִצָּסָו, וְטָמָא מִן גַּעַל וְהַלְלָא כְּלָמָה:

מפטור לפרשת פרה

יט אֲבָנִידְבָּר יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהִיםָה וְאֱלֹהִיםָה לְאָמֵר: זֹאת חֲקַת
הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־צָוָה יְהֹוָה לְאָמֵר בְּבֵרֶר | אֱלֹהִיםָה יִשְׂרָאֵל
וַיַּקְרְבוּ אֶלְיךָ פְּרָה אֲדָמָה תְּמִימָה אֲשֶׁר אַיִן־בָּהּ מָוָס אֲשֶׁר
לֹא־עַלְהָ עַלְיָה עַלְיָה עַלְיָה. וַיְתַמֵּם אָתָה אֱלֹהִיםָה עַל־אֲלָעָר הַבְּהָן
וְהַוְצִיא אָתָה אֱלֹהִיםָה לְמִחְנָה וְשַׁחַט אָתָה לְפָנָיו:
ד וַיַּקְרְבָּה אָלָעָר הַבְּהָן מִדְמָה בְּאַצְבָּעָו וְהַזָּה אֱלֹהִיםָה פְּנֵי
ה אֱלֹהִיםָה מִדְמָה שְׁבָע פָּעָם: וְשַׁרְפָּתָה יְשַׁרְפָּתָה
לְעַיְנָיו אֲתִ-עַרְה וְאֲתִ-בְּשָׁרָה וְאֲתִ-דְמָה עַל-פְּרָשָׁה יְשַׁרְפָּתָה:
ו וַיַּקְרְבָּה הַבְּהָן עַז אָרֶז וְאַזְוָב וְשַׁנִּי תּוֹלְעָת וְהַשְּׁלֵיר אֶל-
וְתוֹךְ שְׁרָפַת הַפָּרָה: וְכַבֵּס בְּגַדְיו הַבְּהָן וְרַחַץ בְּשָׁרוֹ בְּמִים
ח וְאַחֲר יָבָא אֱלֹהִיםָה וְטָמָא הַבְּהָן עַד־הָעָרָב: וְהַשְּׁרָפָתָה
אָתָה יְכַבֵּס בְּגַדְיו בְּמִים וְרַחַץ בְּשָׁרוֹ בְּמִים וְטָמָא

(ב) זאת חקמת התורה. לפי חז"נ ו��ומות כתולס מונין לת' טראל לומד מה
אל מוחוץ למחנה. חוץ לטלת מינות ווילא סח": ושהחטאות לאו
וחטאת רואיה ומטה טעם י"ח, לפיק כה קה, גולה סול מלפני אין לך רשות
סמליה זלה ורואיה (תנ"ה ז"ה): ויקחו אליך. נטולס טה נקלה מט מקר פלה בענין
ומתקין ורואיה פטהו כל קליל צבעת זלה קדס (ס"ט): (ז) אל המחנה. נמקה
לארס להרדים (תנ"ה ז"ה): אל כבש גדייו הפלן ורחל בשרו במים
מבה צמצעך: אדרומה תמיימה. קפאלת מים צלמיים (ספ"י קכ): אלה קי
וכי צמי צערות צחירות פסולה (פל"ב:ט): (ט) אלעוז. מליה צגן (ספ"י טט):

MAFTIR FOR PARASHAS PARAH

19.

ה The Red Cow.

The law of the Red Cow is described by the Sages as the quintessential decree of the Torah (v. 2), meaning that it is beyond human understanding. Because Satan and the nations taunt Israel, saying, "What is the purpose of this commandment?" the Torah states that it is a decree of the One Who gave the Torah, and it is not for anyone to question it (*Rashi*). *Ramban* explains that this particular commandment invites the taunts of heretics because it is performed outside the Temple, as if to propitiate the "demons" of the field. *Tosafos* (*Avodah Zarah* 35a) state that one should not try to explain this precept because God gave us His best and most secret commands in the form of a "Divine kiss," as it were, like the intimacy of a lover to his beloved.

It is axiomatic, however, that since all laws of the Torah are the products of God's intelligence, any human inability to comprehend them indicates the limitation of the student, not the Teacher. As the Sages expressed it, there is nothing meaningless or purposeless in the Torah, and if it seems so, it is only a product of our own deficiency (*Rambam*).

The Midrash to this chapter focuses primarily on one paradox in the laws of the Red Cow: Its ashes purify people who had become contaminated; yet those who engage in its preparation become contaminated. It was regarding this

aspect of its laws that King Solomon exclaimed, "*I said I would be wise, but it is far from me*" (*Ecclesiastes* 7:23). On this theme, the Midrash cites the verse *Who can draw a pure thing out of an impure one? Is it not the One [God]?* (*Job* 14:4). In a similar vein, the Midrash notes a number of such paradoxical cases of righteous people who descended from wicked parents, such as Abraham from Terach, Hezekiah from Ahaz, and Josiah from Ammon. The Talmud adds the paradox that it is forbidden to drink blood, but an infant nurses from its mother, whose blood is transformed into milk to become the source of life (*Niddah* 9a).

The underlying message of all of the above, as well as the many other mysteries of the Torah, is that the Supreme Intelligence has granted man a huge treasury of spiritual and intellectual gifts, but none is more precious than the knowledge that God is infinite, both in existence and in wisdom, while man is as limited in his ability to comprehend as he is in his physical existence. As R' Yochanan told his students regarding our failure to understand the laws of the Red Cow, "It is not the corpse that causes contamination or the ashes of the Cow that cause purity. These laws are decrees of God, and man has no right to question them" (*Midrash*). In other words, an essential component of wisdom is the knowledge that man's failure to understand truth does not make it untrue. [Most of the above is abridged from *R' Munk; The Call of the Torah; ArtScroll*.]

MAFTIR FOR PARASHAS PARAH

19

The Red Cow

HASHEM spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying: ²This is the decree of the Torah, which HASHEM has commanded, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel, and they shall take to you a completely red cow, which is without blemish, and upon which a yoke has not come.

³You shall give it to Elazar the Kohen; he shall take it out to the outside of the camp and someone shall slaughter it in his presence. ⁴Elazar the Kohen shall take some of its blood with his forefinger, and sprinkle some of its blood toward the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times.

⁵Someone shall burn the cow before his eyes — its hide, and its flesh, and its blood, with its dung, shall he burn. ⁶The Kohen shall take cedar wood, hyssop, and crimson thread, and he shall throw [them] into the burning of the cow.

⁷The Kohen shall immerse his clothing and immerse himself in water, and afterward he may enter the camp; and the Kohen shall remain contaminated until the evening. ⁸The one who burns it shall immerse his clothing in water and immerse himself in water; and he shall remain

Chronology.

Contamination and purification, the subjects of this chapter, seem to have no sequential or chronological relationship to the chapters before or after them. As to when the laws of the Red Cow were actually given, there are two traditions. The first is that the laws were initially given to the Jews in Marah, shortly after they left Egypt, but the people were not yet commanded to carry them out [see *Rashi* and *Ramban* to *Exodus* 15:25]. On the first of Nissan, the day the Tabernacle was inaugurated, they were given again in the form of a commandment, and the very next day, on the second of Nissan, Moses oversaw the burning of the first Red Cow (*Gittin* 60b; *Yerushalmi, Megillah* 3:5). Accordingly, the placement of the chapter after events that took place long after the second of Nissan would seem to be an example of the principle that the order of chapters in the Torah is not necessarily chronological (*Pesachim* 6b).

Ramban, however, contends that there is a logical connection between the laws of the Red Cow and the previous chapter. The laws of the Tabernacle and Kohanim, which began in *Leviticus*, were concluded in the last chapter with the list of priestly gifts. Thus, the laws of the Red Cow belong here, for knowledge of the way to remove corpse-contamination was necessary for the priestly and Levite responsibility of preventing contaminated people from entering the Tabernacle. (See also notes to 20:1-2.)

1. אל משה ואל־ אהרן — To Moses and to Aaron. Symbolically, the “Cow” came to atone for the sin of the Golden “Calf,” as if to say let the mother come and clean up the mess left by her child. If so, this explains why the commandment was directed to Aaron, the one who made the Calf.

Many other aspects of the service also allude to the idea noted above, that the Red Cow atoned for the sin of the Golden Calf. Its color is red, which symbolizes sin (see *Isaiah* 1:18); it was not ever to have borne a yoke, to symbolize a sinner, who cast off God’s yoke from himself; and it was burned, just as Aaron had cast gold into a fire to produce the Calf (*Exodus* 32:20). The ritual involves the use of cedar-wood, hyssop, and a thread dyed with the blood of a worm (v. 6), a combination that signifies sin and repentance: a sinner

has been haughty like a lofty cedar tree, and in order to gain atonement he must humble himself like a blade of hyssop grass and a lowly worm (see *Leviticus* 14:4). Just as the sin of the Golden Calf has never been completely forgiven (see *Exodus* 32:34), the ashes of the Red Cow were preserved (*Rashi* to v. 22 citing *R’ Moshe HaDarshan*).

2. אַדְמָה תְּמִיקָה — Completely red. Since the verse specifies that the cow must be blemish-free, it is clear that the word *תְּמִיקָה*, completely, modifies the redness, rather than its physical health (*Mizrachi*). The cow must be so completely red that even two hairs of another color disqualify it (*Rashi*).

3. אֶל־אֱלֹעֵזֶר — To Elazar. The Red Cow had to be burned by the Deputy Kohen Gadol (*Rashi*), to which *Ramban* comments that in view of Aaron’s role in making the Golden Calf, it would have been improper for him to be involved in the service. The Sages differ regarding whether the service of future Red Cows was performed by the Kohen Gadol or not (*Parah* 4:1).

4. אֶל־מִחוֹן לְמִחְנָה — To the outside of the camp. In the Wilderness, the service had to be performed outside the Israelite camp (*Rashi*). In the Land, it was performed outside the walls of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives (*Sifre*).

4. After the slaughter, which did not have to be done by Elazar, he would perform the blood service. Standing to the east of the Tabernacle, or Temple, so that he could see the entrance, he received the blood in a vessel and threw it in the direction of the Tabernacle.

7-10. This passage indicates not only that the people who performed the service became contaminated, but that the contamination extends even to their clothing.

7. וְכַבֵּס וְרַחַץ ... — Shall immerse ... and immerse. Both these terms refer to immersion in a *mikveh*.

הַמִּחְנָה — The camp. The camp of this verse is that of the *Shechinah*, or the Divine Presence, meaning the Tabernacle Courtyard. It cannot refer to either the Israelite or Levite camp since ordinary contamination does not bar a person from entering those places. The Kohen immerses himself and his garments, and the contamination leaves them with nightfall.

עד רמשא: טוינוש גבר דכי ית קטמא רתורתא ויצנע מברא למשריתה באתר דכי ותהי לכונתה דבנין ישראל למטריא למי אקיוטה חטאטה הייא: ויצבע דמכויניש ית קטמא רתורתא ית לבושוהי ולגיוריא רותגערן בינייהון לבני ישראל ויהי מסאכ שבעא יומין: יב הו לאקיטים עלאם: יא דיקרב במתה לכל נפשא דאנשא ויהי מסקאב שבעא יומין: יב הו יידי עלוהי ביומה תליתה וביוםא שביעאה ירכאים לא יידי עלוהי ביומה תליתה וביוםא שביעאה לא ירכאים לא יידי עלוהה לא ירכאי כל דיקרב במתה בנפשא דאנשא די יימות ולא יידי עלוהי ית משכנא די סאייב ווישטעי אנסא ההוא מישואל ארי מי אקיוטה לא אזדריקו עלוהי מסאכ שבעא יומין: טו וכל פון דחחס פתיח דלית מגופת שען מוקע עלוהי מסאכ הווא: טו וכל די דיקרב על אפי חקלא בקטל חרבא או במתה או בגרמא דאנשא או בקברא יידי מסאכ שביעא יומין: זיסבון לדמסאכ מעפר יקורת חטאנה וויתן עלוהי מי מבועע לנו: זיסב אוזבא ויטבול במעיא גבר דכי ווידי על משכנא ועל כל מניא ועל נפשתה די הו תפון ועל דיקרב בגרמא או בקטל או במתה או בקברא: יט יידי דכיא על מסאכ בא ביומה תליתה וביוםא שביעאה וויתבע לבושוהי וידכנה ביוםא שביעאה וויתבע לבושוהי וויתכני אנטה דבנין ישראל ווירכבי ברמשא: וגבר די ייסתאב ולא יידי עלוהי ווישטעי אנסא ההוא מגו קדלא אורי ית מקדשא די סאכ מי אקיוטה לא אזדריקו עלוהי מסאכ הווא:

עד הערב: ואסף | איש טהור את אפר הפה והנימה
מחוץ למתחנה בمكان טהور זהיתה לעדרת בני ישראל
למשמרת למי נדה חטאת הוא: ובכיס האסף את אפר
הפה את בגדיו וטמא עד-הערב והיתה לבני ישראל
ולגר הניגר בתוכם לחקת עולם: הנגע במת לכל-נפש
יב אדם וטמא שבעת ימים: הוא יתחטא בו ביום
השלישי וביום השביעי יטהר ואם לא יתחטא ביום
השלישי וביום השביעי לא יטהר: כל-הגע במת
בנפש האדם אשר ימות ולא יתחטא את משפט יהוה
טמא ונברתה הנפש והוא מישראל כי מי נדה לא-
זרק עליו טמא יהיה עוד טמאתו בו: זאת התורה אדם
בירות באהל כל-הבא אל-אהל וכל-אשר באهل
ויטמא שבעת ימים: וכל כל פתוich אשר אין צמיד
פתייל עליו טמא הוא: וכל אשר יגע על-פני השדה
בחליל-חרב או במת או בעצם אדם או בקבר יטמא
שבעת ימים: ולקחו לטמא מעפר שרפת החטאת
ונתן עליו מים חיים אל-כל: ולקח אזוב וטבל במים
איש טהור וזה עלה-אהל ועל-כל-הבלים ועל-
הנפשות אשר היו-שם ועל-הגע בעצם או בחליל
או במת או בקבר: וזה נטהר על-הטמא ביום
השלישי וביום השביעי וחטאנו ביום השביעי וככיס
בגדיו ורצח אנשים וטהר בערב: ואיש אשר יטמא ולא
יתחטא ונברתה הנפש והוא מתוך הקгал כי את
מקודש יהוה טמא מי נדה לא-זרק עליו טמא הוא:

ו רכיעית דס (חולין עב): את משבחן ה' טמא. חס בכנים לערלה אף ילו צפוייה נלע הולח צליטי זכיעי (מדרכת הגדה): עוד טומאחו בו. ה"ע סטיל (פסחים): יוז) כל הבא אל האה"ל. כנוד קבמה חמוכין: (טו) וככל בלי פחהות. ככל ורדים וככטב מדכט, חלון מקלט טומלה מגזו הולח מטוכו, לפיקח חס להן מגופת מיזמו פטולה מעלי יפה בחזור טמלה הוה, רה חס י"ח מיד פטלי מעלי טוכר ספכי קכו):PTHIL. לנען מהוחר בצלען עברי וס"ה ערבי, וכן נפקולי חליסט פטלי, (בלדיות נטה) מהטבלי עס קחוינו: (טו) על פני השדה. רצויו ירכזו לרבות גולו ודופק, ופצעונו, על פפי סכדה, חלון זס הלא, מטמיה קממה קס בגמיה: (יט) וחטא בוים השבעין. קוח גמר טיכוקו: (ב) ואיש אשר טמא וגוו. חס נלמר מקדך למס נחלמי מכך כי' כדריחעל כבדועות (טז):

(ט) והנich מוחז למחנה. נסכה חלקיים מחילקה. יחד נכן צה"ר סמוכה, ולח'ד מלחיק בכל מכםמות, ויח'ד נכן בחיל (ספרי קכ"ה; פרה ג'יל). זה כל מכםמות ריח חז' לערכה ליטול ממו' כי עניירות וכל היליכין לרשותה. וזה סבירה במקהה כה'ים גדולים לפכו'ת להן מקדצין קימנה. וזה צביח' נכן מכםלה מגורה סכטוג, סבמלה והיתה לעדרת בני ישראל למשמרת (טוספ' פ' פרה ג'ה): למי נדרה. למי זיה, כמו ידו לך' כי (וילס' גאנ'). לידות לך' קרנות קגוייס (ולר' כ:ז) נכן דיק'ה: חטאת הוא. נכן קהי' כפטעו'. ונפי' קלטוציא', קלחה' סכטוג חטוף' נומר סקל'י' קקדשים לאחד' גאנ'ה (ספרי זס; מנחות נ'ה): (ויב) הוא יחתחטא בו. גהפל פ'רעה (ס'ה' קאה): (ויג) במת' בנפש. ווליא' מון, צל' נס' האדם, לאוניל' נס' קאמה צל'ן טומחה' נס' ליכ' קול'ה. דרכ' מה'ר, גנפ'ס

9. מיחוץ למחנה — *Outside the camp.* The ashes were divided into three parts: (a) One part was stored on the Mount of Olives for future use: either to purify the Kohen performing

the service in the future (*Mizrachi; Bertinoro*), or to mix with the ashes of future Red Cows (*Nachalas Yaakov; Beer Mayim Chaim*); (b) another part was divided among the twenty-four

contaminated until the evening.⁹ A pure man shall gather the ash of the cow and place [it] outside the camp in a pure place. For the assembly of Israel it shall remain as a safekeeping, for water of sprinkling; it is for purification.¹⁰ The one who gathers the ash of the cow shall immerse his clothing and remain contaminated until the evening. It shall be for the Children of Israel and for the proselyte who dwells among them as an eternal decree.

¹¹ Whoever touches the corpse of any human being shall be contaminated for seven days. ¹² He shall purify himself with it on the third day and on the seventh day, then he will become pure; but if he will not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not become pure. ¹³ Whoever touches the dead body of a human being who will have died, and will not have purified himself — if he shall have contaminated the Tabernacle of HASHEM, that person shall be cut off from Israel; because the water of sprinkling has not been thrown upon him, he shall remain contaminated; his contamination is still upon him.

¹⁴ This is the teaching regarding a man who would die in a tent: Anything that enters the tent and anything that is in the tent shall be contaminated for seven days. ¹⁵ Any open vessel that has no cover fastened to it is contaminated. ¹⁶ On the open field: Anyone who touches one slain by the sword, or one that died, or a human bone, or a grave, shall be contaminated for seven days. ¹⁷ They shall take for the contaminated person some of the ashes of the burning of the purification [animal], and put upon it spring water in a vessel. ¹⁸ A pure man shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, and sprinkle upon the tent, upon all the vessels, upon the people who were there, and upon the one who touched the bone, or the slain one, or the one that died, or the grave. ¹⁹ The pure person shall sprinkle upon the contaminated person on the third day and on the seventh day, and shall purify him on the seventh day; then he shall immerse his clothing and immerse himself in water and become purified in the evening. ²⁰ But a man who becomes contaminated and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from the midst of the congregation, if he shall have contaminated the Sanctuary of HASHEM; because the water of sprinkling has not been thrown upon him, he is contaminated.

divisions of Kohanim, for use in purifying people; and (c) the third part was kept in the *Chail*, an area next to the wall of the Courtyard, for safekeeping, as required by this verse (*Rashi*).

טְהָרָת דֹּאָת — *It is for purification.* The Torah uses the word *chatas*, which usually refers to a sin-offering, to indicate that it is forbidden to use the ashes for personal benefit, as if they were an offering (*Rashi*), and if one does, he must bring an offering and make restitution, as in *Leviticus 5:14-16* (*Sifre*).

12. בְּ — *With it*, i.e., the purification is carried out with the ashes of the Red Cow, according to the procedure outlined in the following verses.

13. If someone became contaminated through a dead human and neglected to purify himself with the ashes of the Red Cow — even though he immersed himself in a *mikveh* — he remains in his state of contamination. Consequently, if he intentionally enters the Sanctuary or Courtyard, he is subject to the Heavenly punishment of *kares*, meaning that his soul is cut off from the Jewish people (*Rashi*; *Ramban*).

14. בְּאַדְלָן — *In a tent.* This verse teaches the law of contamination under a “tent,” or any other sort of cover. The roof over the corpse has the effect of spreading the contamination under the entire air space that it covers. Thus, if a dead body is in one room of a house or under part of a tree, any person

or vessel that is anywhere in the house or under another part of the tree’s shelter becomes contaminated.

15. The subject of this verse is an earthenware vessel, regarding which the Torah has taught that it can become contaminated only if a contaminated substance comes into its *interior* (see *Leviticus 11:33*). The same principle would apply if the vessel were under a roof, for in that case the contaminated air space is in the interior of the vessel. But if the vessel has a cover sealed onto it, thus insulating its interior from contact with the contaminated air, it cannot become contaminated. However, wood or metal vessels would become contaminated whether or not they were covered, because they can be contaminated from the outside (*Rashi*; *Sifre*).

16. עַל-פְּנֵי הַשָּׂרָה — *On the open field.* In an open field where there is no roof over the body, contamination is conveyed only by actual touching.

17-20. The Torah gives the process of purification. First fresh water from a spring or river is put into a vessel. Ashes are poured onto it and they are mixed together (*Sotah 16b*). If the tent is made of materials that can become defiled, it must be purified. [Buildings that are anchored to the ground do not become contaminated, however.] A pure person throws

כ**א** והיתה להם לחתת עולם ומזה מיד הנדרה יכבר בוגרין
כב והגיעו במי הנדרה יטמא עד־הערב: וכל אשר־יגע־בו
כג הטעמא יטמא והנפש הנגעתتطמא עד־הערב:

(ב) ומזה מי הנדרה. רצופינו הללו סקמזה טהור, וזה כל למד סקמזה של חטלה טהרה טומלה חומרה טהור, גדים צלמי, מה צלחין כן צונגע, וזה צלאילו כלצון מזח נומר לך צלחין מטמלה עד צילען צינור קויה ונדה ט). והונגע וגוי יטמא. ואין טען בכוס צגדיס: (בב) ובכל אשר יציע בו הטמא. כך סקמזה צממה, יטמא; והונגע הנוגעת. זו צפחה מות: הטעמא עד הערב. כלן למדנו צדמתה לך קדוזות פטומלה וכוננות צו לך פטומלה ומטמלה חדס (ספכלי קל, כליס חדן; ג' צ).oso פירוכך לא' מכםעה וכלקוטיא, ומדריך לך עטמקת' מיסודה כל רצוי מטה לךךן. וחס. ויקחו אליך. מצלתא. כהס צאש פרקן צומי קזאצ' לענגל מצלתא לך יצי'ו וצלפה מצלתא: פרה אודומה. מצלן לצען צפחה צטפרק פלטין כל מלך חמוץ נצול היה וקנוקת קז'וחה לך קצעל פרה וצלפה על הענגל (ונקומו ח): אודומה. על כס כס יולדמו כטולע וצפעה ה': (ח) סקמטה קרוי קוזוס: תמיימה.

some ash-water upon the contaminated person or vessels on the third and seventh days, after which the person and vessels are immersed in a *mikveh* to conclude the purification process. Verse 20 repeats the law of verse 13 that one who enters the Sanctuary while contaminated is liable to *kares*. Rashi comments that the first verse refers to the Tabernacle, the second one to the Temple.

21. וְשַׁפֵּת — And the one who sprinkles. This cannot refer to one who throws the water to purify a contaminated person, because verse 18 implies that even after sprinkling the water on the tent, the person goes on to sprinkle it on the vessels and people; clearly, if he were to have become contaminated he would be disqualified from further sprinkling (*Ralbag*; *Malbim*). Rather, the Sages explain, this verse refers to one

who merely carries the water for any purpose other than purification. The Torah describes this as “sprinkling” to imply that he does not become contaminated unless he carries at least a quantity of water sufficient for sprinkling. There is an unusual law in this verse. One who carries contaminates even his garments, but one who merely touches becomes contaminated himself, but his garments do not (*Rashi*).

22. נִטְבַּח — *The contaminated one.* This verse refers back to a person who touched a corpse, and it reveals that his degree of contamination is so severe that he can pass on contamination to another human being. The second person, however, does not require the seven-day process described above. He need merely immerse himself in a *mikveh*, and then remains contaminated only until evening (*Rashi*).

הפטרת פרשת פרה / HAFTARAS PARASHAS PARAH

יחזקאל לו:ט-לח / Ezekiel 36:16-38

36 ¹⁶**T**he word of HASHEM came to me, saying: ¹⁷ Ben Adam,
the House of Israel dwell on their land and contaminate
it, by their way and by their doings. Like the contamination of a
menstruous woman was their way before Me. ¹⁸ So I poured My
anger upon them because of the blood that they poured upon the
earth — and they defiled it with their idols — ¹⁹ so I scattered
them among the nations and they were dispersed among the
lands. According to their ways and their doings did I judge them;
²⁰ and they came to the nations to which they came, and they
desecrated My holy Name when it was said of them, “These are
HASHEM’s people, but they departed His land”; ²¹ but I pitied My
holy Name that the House of Israel desecrated among the na-
tions to which they came.

²² Therefore say to the House of Israel: "Thus says my Lord HASHEM/ELOHIM: Not for your sake do I act, O House of Israel, but for My holy Name that you have desecrated among the nations to which you came.²³ And I will sanctify My great Name that was desecrated among the nations, that you desecrated among them. Then the nations shall know that I am HASHEM — the words of my Lord

לו טו ויהי דברי יהוה אליו לאמר יי בָנְאָדָם בֵית
ישראאל ישבים על אֶרְמָתָם וַיִּטְמָאו אֹתָה בְּדָרְכָם
ובעלילותם בְּטָמָאת הַנְּדָה הִיְתָה דָרְכָם לְפָנָי
יח וְאַשְׁפֵךְ חֲמַתִּי עַלְיכֶם עַל-הַקְם אֲשֶׁר-שָׁפְכוּ עַל-
הָאָרֶץ וּבְגָלֻלֵיכֶם טָמָא-הָיָה ט וְאַפִּיצְ אַתֶּם בָּגּוֹיִם וַיָּזְרֹא
בָּאֲרָצֹת בְּדָרְכָם וּבַעֲלִילוֹתָם שְׁפָטִתִים כ וַיָּבוֹא אֶל-
הָגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-בָאו שֶׁם וַיְחַלֵּלוּ אֶת-שֶׁם קָדְשֵׁי בְּאָמָר
לָהֶם עַמְּדֵיהֶנוּ אֶלָה וּמְאָרָצֹו יִצְאֵנוּ כ א וְאַחֲמֵל עַל-שֶׁם
קָדְשֵׁי אֲשֶׁר חָלַלְהוּ בֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-בָאו
שְׁמָה כ כ לְכָן אָמָר לְבִתִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה
לֹא לְמַעֲנֵבָם אָנָי עֲשָׂה בֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּי אַס-לְשָׁמֶן
קָדְשֵׁי אֲשֶׁר חָלַלְתָם בָּגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-בָאתָם שֶׁמֶן
כ וּקְדָשְׁתִי אֶת-שְׁמִי הַגָּדוֹל הַמְחַלֵּל בָּגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר
חָלַלְתָם בְּתוֹכָם וַיָּרַע הָגּוֹיִם בַּיְאָנִי יְהוָה נָאֵם אֱלֹהִים

²¹ This shall be for them an eternal decree. And the one who sprinkles the water of sprinkling shall immerse his clothing, and one who touches water of sprinkling shall be contaminated until the evening. ²² Anything that the contaminated one may touch shall become contaminated, and the person who touches him shall become contaminated until the evening.

HASHEM/ELOHIM — when I become sanctified through you in their sight;²⁴ and I shall take you from the nations and gather you in from all the countries, and I shall bring you to your Land;²⁵ and I shall sprinkle pure water upon you, that you be cleansed. From all your contamination and from all your filth I will cleanse you;²⁶ and I shall give you a new heart, and a new spirit shall I put within you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh;²⁷ and My spirit shall I put within you, and I shall cause you to go by My decrees and guard My laws and perform them;²⁸ and you shall dwell in the land that I gave your fathers; and you shall be to Me a people and I shall be your God;²⁹ and I shall save you from all your contaminations, and I shall summon the grain and increase it, and I shall not place famine upon you;³⁰ and I shall increase the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field so that you no longer accept the shame of hunger among the nations.³¹ Then you will remember your evil ways and your doings that were not good, and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of your sins and your abominations.³² Not for your sake do I act — the words of my Lord HASHEM/ELOHIM — let it be known to you. Be ashamed and humiliated because of your ways, O House of Israel.

³³ Thus says my Lord HASHEM/ELOHIM: On the day when I cleanse you from all your sins, and cause the cities to be inhabited and the ruins to be built,³⁴ and the desolated land to be tilled instead of being desolate in the eyes of every passerby;³⁵ then they shall say, “This very land that was desolate has become a Garden of Eden; and the cities that were destroyed and were desolate and ruined shall be fortified — inhabited!”³⁶ And the nations that will remain around you will know that I am HASHEM. I will have rebuilt the ruins, replanted the wasteland. I, HASHEM, have spoken and acted.

Sephardim and Chabad Chassidim conclude the Haftarah here. Ashkenazim continue on next page.

¶ Parashas Parah

On the Sabbath after Purim (the second Sabbath, when Purim falls on Thursday or Friday), two Torah Scrolls are removed from the Ark. The *Sidrah* of the week is read from the first, and from the second, the chapter of *Parah Adumah*, the Red Cow, is read. It gives the procedure through which people can purify themselves from the contamination caused by a human corpse. The reading of this chapter was instituted for this time of the year because Jews were required to purify themselves before coming to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage festival of Passover.

The Haftarah read on the Sabbath of *Parashas Parah* contains the verse, *And I shall sprinkle pure water upon you, that you be cleansed. From all your contamination and from all your filth I will cleanse you* (*Ezekiel 36:25*). There are other parallels in the

יהוה בְּהַקְרֵשִׁי בְּכֶם לְעַיְנֵיכֶם: כְּדֹאֲלָקְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִן־
הָגּוֹיִם וּבְכָצְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִפְּלַיְהָאָרֶץ וְהַבָּאָתִי אֶתְכֶם
אַל־אֲדָמָתֶם: כְּה וּבְרִקְתִּי עַלְיכֶם מִים טָהוּרִים
וְטָהָרָתֶם מִפְּלַט טָמָאָתֶיכֶם וּמִפְּלַגְלָלִיכֶם אַטָּהָר
אֶתְכֶם: כְּוֹנְתִּתִּי לְכֶם לְבָבְךָ וּרוּחָתְךָ אַתָּה
בְּקָרְבָּכֶם וְהַסְּרָתִי אַתְּלָבְךָ הַאֲבָנָן מִבְשָׁרְכֶם וּנוֹתָתִי
לְכֶם לְבָבְךָ שֶׁר: כְּוֹאֲתִרְוֹחֵי אַתָּה בְּקָרְבָּכֶם וּעֲשִׂיתָם:
אֶת אַשְׁר־בְּחַקֵּי תְּלַכְּבוּ וּמִשְׁפְּטוּ תְּשִׁמְרוּ וּעֲשִׂיתָם:
כְּה וַיַּשְׁבַּתְּהָם בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִתְּחִילָה לְאַבְתֵיכֶם וְהַיִּחְיָתָם לְיַלְּעֵם וְאַנְכִּי אַהֲרֵה לְכֶם לְאַלְמִימִים: כְּה וּבְשֻׁעָתִי אֶתְכֶם
מִפְּלַט טָמָאָתֶיכֶם וּקְרָאתִי אַל־הַדָּגָן וְהַרְבִּיתִי אֶתְךָ
וְלֹא־אַתָּה עַלְיכֶם רָעָב: כְּה וּבְרִבִּיתִי אַתְּפָרִי קָעֵז
וְתִּנְוֹתַת הַשְּׁרָה לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר לְאַתְּקָחוּ עַזְרָפָת
רָעָב בְּגָוִים: לְאַוְצָרָתָם אַתְּדִּרְכֵיכֶם הַרְעָם
וּמַעְלָלֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר לְאַטּוּבִים וּמַקְתָּתָם בְּפָנֵיכֶם
עַל עֲוֹנְתֵיכֶם וְעַל תּוֹעֲבַתֵיכֶם: כְּה לֹא לְמַעֲנָכֶם אַנְכִּי
עָשָׂה נָאָם אֲדֹנִי יְהָוָה וּזְרוּ לְכֶם בּוֹשָׁוּ וְהַבְּלָמוּ
מִדְרְכֵיכֶם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל: כְּה אָמַר אֲדֹנִי יְהָוָה
בַּיּוֹם טְהָרֵי אֶתְכֶם מִפְּלַט עֲוֹנְתֵיכֶם וְהַשְׁבָּתִי אֶת־
הָעָרִים וּנְבָנוּ הַחֲרֹבּוֹת: כְּה וְהָאָרֶץ הַנְּשָׁמָה תַּעֲבֶר
תְּחַת אֲשֶׁר הִיְתָה שְׁמָמָה לְעַיִן בְּלַעֲזָר: כְּה וְאָמַרְתָּ
הָאָרֶץ הַלֹּו הַנְּשָׁמָה הִיְתָה בְּגַדְעָן וְהָעָרִים
הַחֲרֹבּוֹת וְהַנְּשָׁמוֹת וְהַנְּהָרָסּוֹת בְּצֻרוֹת יִשְׁבּוּ
לְוַיְרְדוּ הָגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאַרְזְוּ סְבִיבָתֵיכֶם בַּי | אַנְכִּי יְהָוָה
בְּנִיתִי הַנְּהָרָסּוֹת נְטַעַתִּי הַנְּשָׁמָה אַנְכִּי יְהָוָה דְּבָרַתִּי
וּעֲשִׂיתִי

Haftarah between the concepts of sin represented by *contamination*, and atonement represented by *purity*. This idea is discussed in the commentary to the ArtScroll *Ezekiel* (pp.534-5), as follows:

Freedom of will in moral matters is the first and irreplaceable condition for living one's life on the higher plane demanded by the Torah. Belief in man's freedom of action, however, is endangered by the fact that man cannot avoid death and that he is subject to the superficial limitations imposed by the forces of nature. This belief is particularly shaken by the sight of a dead human being. If the whole human being has succumbed to death, been overpowered by physical forces — if man, like all other organic beings, cannot escape the spell of an overpowering force — then there is no room for the moral “you shall” next to the

³⁷ Thus says my Lord HASHEM/ELOHIM: Furthermore I will make Myself accessible to the House of Israel to act for them. I shall increase them — the men — like sheep. ³⁸ Like the sheep for Divine service, like the sheep of Jerusalem on her festivals, so shall the destroyed cities be filled by sheep-men — and they shall know that I am HASHEM.

לֹבֶה אָמַר אֶלְנִי יְהוָה עֹד נָאֵת אֲכִרֵש לְבֵית־יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְעֵשֹׂות לְהֶם אֲרֵבָה אַתֶּם בְּצָאן אֲדָם: לְחַבְצָאן
קָדְשִׁים בְּצָאן יְרוּשָׁלָם בְּמַעַרְיָה בָּן תְּהִינָה
הָעָרִים הַחֲרֻבּוֹת מְלָאוֹת צָאן אֲדָם וַיַּדְעָו כִּי־אָנִי
יְהוָה:

physical “you must.” Moral freedom of will would then be an illusion, and the Divine law of morality with its demand for total free-willed devotion to the illuminating, purifying fire of its sanctuary would be incomprehensible (*R’ Hirsch, Numbers* 19:22).

Thus, sin is related not only to death, but also to contamination, which is closely associated with death. Because the sinner is shackled by his desires, he loses spiritual control of his actions. He is swept along by the physical lusts that have overpow-

ered his spiritual self. Thus, the most meaningful part of his life, the spiritual, has been killed. For this reason, when God forgives man’s sin and grants him a new heart and a new spirit, He is imbuing him with *purity*, the state of mind in which man is the sole master of his actions. A living (and therefore a pure) person uses his body as he wills; it is his tool to use as he sees fit. The regenerate sinner, upon returning to the state of purity, joins once more the state of the living — and the free (*Chazon HaMikra*).