

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 21

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KI TISSAH

18th Adar 5776

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 30, verses 11 – Chapter 31, verse 17

- ✚ Hashem commands Moshe to take a half shekel coin from every male over the age of twenty in order to count them. The money taken will be used for the upkeep of the Mishkan.
- ✚ Hashem asks Moshe to build a Keyor (A copper washbasin with a copper base), to be used by Aaron and his sons to wash their hands and feet with, before entering the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting) or when approaching the Mizbayah (Altar).
- ✚ Moshe is told the formula by Hashem of how to make the Shemen Hamishha (The anointing oil), which must not be used or copied by anyone except the Kohanim.
- ✚ Hashem bestows great wisdom and understanding upon Betzalel, who is to become the architect in the construction of the Mishkan, with aid from his assistant Oholiav
- ✚ Bnai Yisrael are instructed to keep the Shabbat as a sign between them and Hashem.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 31, verse 18 – Chapter 33, verse 11

- ✚ Moshe had ascended Mount Sinai in order to receive the Luchot (two stone tablets which the Ten statements (Ten Commandments) were inscribed upon by Hashem himself.) but the people waiting at the foot of the mountain were getting anxious that Moshe had yet to return back to them.
- ✚ They demand and force Aaron to create for them an idol, to replace Moshe as their leader.
- ✚ All the Golden Jewellery which was gathered up by the people to make the idol was thrown into a furnace, where the image of a calf was miraculously formed and came out of the flames.
- ✚ Aaron declares that the following day will be a festival to Hashem. In response the people arose up early and began to offer up sacrifices in front of the idol.
- ✚ Hashem is angry and wishes to destroy the people for their acts of desecration, and to begin afresh, creating a new nation from Moshe's descendants. However Moshe pleads on their behalf not to wipe them out and reminds Hashem of the Promises he had made with Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaacov that he will personally lead them to the land of Israel.
- ✚ Acquiescing to Moshe, Hashem backs down and lets the people live.
- ✚ Moshe descends the Mountain carrying the two Luchot, but upon seeing the people rejoicing around the idol. He throws down and shatters the Luchot into pieces.
- ✚ The idol is destroyed and Moshe re-ascends Mount Sinai to ask Hashem to forgive the people for their sins.
- ✚ Hashem does so but decides not to lead Bnai Yisrael to the land of Israel personally but will send down an angel to lead them in his stead.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 33, verses 12- 16 and

R'Vi'i - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 33, verses 17 - 23

- ✚ Moshe asks Hashem to reveal his true essence to him. Hashem replies no one has ever seen me and lived. Instead Hashem places Moshe in a cleft of a rock and shows him a vision.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 34, verses 1 - 9

- ✚ Hashem tells Moshe that he must ascend the mountain once more and carve for himself a second set of Luchot.
- ✚ Hashem then reveals to Moshe the thirteen attributes of mercy.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 34, verses 10 -26

- ✚ Moshe is given additional instructions by Hashem, concerning what Bnai Yisrael must do, upon reaching and dwelling in the land of Israel.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 34, verses 27 - 35

- ✚ Moshe descends the mountain but Bnai Yisrael are afraid to approach him because the radiance of Hashem is shining through on Moshe's face.
- ✚ Moshe puts on a veil to cover his face up and only removes it when he is speaking to Hashem directly.

Haftorah – 1st BOOK OF KINGS Chapter 18 verses 1 to 39

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ King Achav and his wife Ezevel ruled the 10 Tribes with an iron fist advancing the worship of idols throughout the kingdom.
- ✚ The prophet Eliyahu (Elijah), challenges Achav's hold over his people by demanding a showdown on Mount. Carmel between himself and the false prophets of the idol Ba'al.
- ✚ The confrontation takes place, proving to everyone that there is only the one true god, Hashem himself.

GEMATRIA LINKED TO THE SEDRA:

- ✚ According to the Talmud, everyone from the age of twenty and above is deemed accountable in Torah law for their sins. How do we know this?
- ✚ The Gematria for the words וּמַעַלָה שְׁנָה 'Shanna vamaalah (20) years and up' is 506; which has the same numerical value of עֲוֹנָשִׁים לִי li'onashim for punishment' hinting to the reason why during the census, the age of twenty was chosen to be the earliest age a person had to donate a half-shekel coin.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

One of the holiest tefillos (prayers) in which we recite on auspicious occasions like Selichot and Yom Kippur for example is taught in this week's Sedra. I'm referring to what's commonly known as the Yud Gimmel Middos of Rachamim, (Hashem's 13 Attributes of Mercy.)

These 13 middos of rachamim were taught in very dramatic fashion by Hashem himself to Moshe straight after the sin of the golden calf. "G-d descended in a cloud and stood with Moshe there, and G-d passed before his face, and taught Moshe the 13 middos of rachamim." our Sages understand from the Talmud, relating to this passage, that these 13 attributes must be recited when we the Jewish people are in need of forgiveness.

Hashem is telling Moshe, "Any time my people sin, have them recite this prayer and I in my mercy will always forgive them." I understand why the sages believe this is one of the most important tefillos to learn but surely there is more to atoning for our misdeeds and being forgiven by Hashem. can we really, just by reciting these 13 attributes make our sins vanish into thin air?

The Maharal of Prague provides an entirely different perspective concerning the effectiveness of the 13 attributes. The Talmud, he explains, never stated that the recitation of the 13 attributes erases our sins. The Gemara did not say, "recite before me this formula and I (Hashem) will forgive you", but "perform these attributes before me, then I will forgive you. Hashem was providing Moshe and Bnai Yisrael a description of His attributes of mercy as guiding principles regarding the decisions that we must make in life.

The Maharal of Prague goes on to say that 'Man' is created in Hashem's image. This does not mean that we are physically similar to Hashem, but that we share his attributes. Implying, we are all capable of elevating ourselves by incorporating the Divine attributes in our own lives. So, when we recite the 13 attributes of mercy, we should not expect our mistakes to magically disappear. The only way to access the full benefit of this prayer is to perform these 13 attributes of mercy wholeheartedly. Merely by doing this will make us worthy of being forgiven.

The recitation of the 13 middos is a method to internalize this concept and to help us imitate Hashem, to be compassionate and kind, charitable and slow to anger, to empathize with the plight of a friend, a neighbour or even a stranger who may be in need or who is suffering through a difficulty or an illness. This is the essential meaning of the 13 attributes of mercy that Hashem taught to Moshe, and this is the way we achieve teshuva, atonement, and forgiveness whenever we unfortunately have erred.

Let us all be inspired by Hashem's 13 attributes of mercy, not just to recite them, but to emulate Hashem and rise up to the occasion to what Hashem himself hopes and knows we are capable of; not only on Yom Kippur but every day of our lives too.

