

Parashah 21

# Ki Tissa

## פי תשא

“When you take”

Exodus 30:11 – 34:35

Torah Together



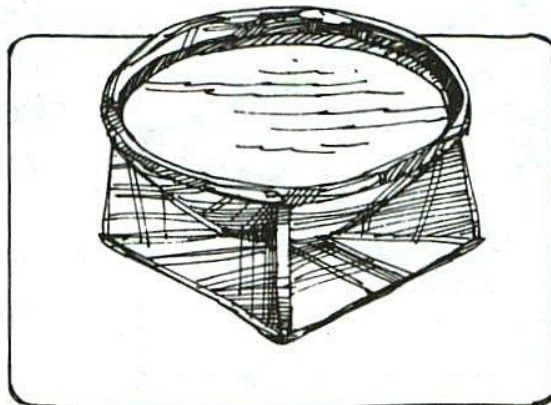
While the previous two *Torah* portions focused in some detail on the construction of the Tabernacle and its associated articles, this portion returns to the story of the Israelites and describes a key event which occurred as they were encamped at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Also, we will witness a meaningful encounter between Moses and God from which much can be learned about the character of our God.

### 1. Atonement Money - 30:11-16

When were the Israelites to pay their atonement money? How much did they pay? What aspects of this command of God do you find interesting?

### 2. Bronze Laver - 30:17-21

What was the purpose of the bronze laver or wash basin? Why was it necessary? What significance does this have in the life of the believer today?



### Census and Atonement

In this passage, God ties the paying of atonement with the taking of a census. In ancient times, taking a census was typically done in preparation for war. Only able-bodied men were counted and the purpose was to assess an army's ability to defeat an enemy. By counting the money received in this way, Israel's leaders knew how many soldiers they could take to battle.

### Scripture Link:

The requirement to be “cleansed” before meeting with God is made clear in the *Torah*. The Apostles also understood this need as it applies to believers in *Yeshua*. See **Ephesians 5:26, John 15:3** and **I John 1:9** for more insight into the need for cleansing before meeting with God.

### **Secret Recipes**

The Torah gives precise recipes for the making of anointing oil and incense to be used in worship. By including the command, "Do not make any other oil (or incense) using the same formula," God was assuring that these items would not become commonplace. He wants our worship of Him to be special and unique.

### **Sabbath Observation**

Can you see why God would reiterate the command to observe the Sabbath at this place in the story? Perhaps He was trying to point out that even though constructing His Tabernacle was important, it was not more important than observing the Sabbath, setting it apart by doing no work.

### **3. Anointing Oil - 30:22-33**

What were the ingredients used in the anointing oil? How was it used? What did God command to assure that it was sacred? Do you see any symbolism here?

### **4. Incense - 30:34-38**

What were the ingredients used in the incense? Where was it to be used? What did God command to assure that it was sacred? Do you see any symbolism here?

### **5. Bezalel and Oholiab - 31:1-11**

Who did God choose to carry out the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings? From what tribes were they? What did God do to assure their success?

### **6. The Sabbath - 31:12-18**

a) Why does God say that the Israelites are to observe the Sabbath?

b) All of chapters 25 through 31 describe what God told Moses when he went up into the cloud on Mount Sinai. According to 31:18, what did God do when He finished speaking to Moses?

## 7. The Golden Calf - 32:1 - 33:6

a) How long had the people waited for Moses to come down from the mountain? What were their reasons for wanting a physical image to worship? What role did Aaron play? What insights into his character do you get from this?

b) How did Moses learn of the people's activities? What proposal did God make to Moses in verses 9-10? Why do you think God needed Moses to "leave" or "go away" from Him in verse 10?

c) Analyze Moses' response to God's proposal. What arguments did he use to "change God's mind"? How was God's proposal a test for Moses? Can you identify other instances where God "changed" His mind?

d) From the exchange in verses 17-18, what can you infer about Joshua's whereabouts while Moses was on the mountain? Do you see any significance in what Moses did with the stone tablets? What did he do with the golden calf idol?

### **The Golden Calf**

The idol that Aaron fashioned for the Israelites was probably not a pagan god. The last part of **Exodus 32:4** can be translated "This is your God, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." However, God had made it very clear in **Exodus 20:4-5** that "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath ..." and "You shall not bow down to them or worship them." So even if the Israelites identified the statue of the golden calf with YHWH, it was still a violation of one of His commandments.

### **Scripture Link:**

The idea that God would "change his mind" is intriguing. We know that God is omniscient, knowing all things. Since He knows from the beginning how events will unfold, He would have no need to change his mind. Most scholars believe that these words are used of God to reinforce the idea that though He is an all-knowing God, He still has feelings and emotions like humans. It helps us relate to Him better. Another interesting case of God changing His mind is contained in the short Book of **Jonah**.

### Set Apart

Notice that the Levites were the only ones to respond to Moses' command, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." (**Exodus 32:26**) These Levites then proceeded to exact the punishment of God on the people, killing 3,000 fellow Israelites. In **Exodus 32:29**, Moses tells the Levites, "You have been set apart to the LORD today ... and he has blessed you this day." God blessed the Levites by choosing them to serve Him as priests and scribes.

### The Glory of God

In **Exodus 33:18**, Moses asks God, "Now show me your **glory**." The Hebrew word translated as "glory" is *kavod*, which means literally "heaviness." The word has a military connotation and alludes to battle armor, which was heavy and indicated the power and might of the wearer. Thus Moses was saying, "Show me your battle armor," or "Show me your power and might." Moses wanted to see the **power** of God. However, God's reply to Moses in the next verse was "... no one may see me and live." Perhaps it would be a bit like staring at the Sun.

e) What was Aaron's explanation for the people's sin? Who separated themselves to Moses as "for YHWH"? Who carried out the punishment for the people's sin? Considering how many people died, what conclusions can you draw?

f) The following day, Moses went back up the mountain to try to make atonement for the sin of the people. What did he offer to God for atonement? Did God accept Moses offer? What was God's punishment for the people's sin?

g) How did God indicate that He had not forsaken His people or His promise? Why did God say that He would not accompany them? What was the people's response?

### 8. The Tent of Meeting - 33:7-11

Do you think the "tent of meeting" described here is the same as the Tabernacle? Why or why not? How did people know that God was speaking to Moses "face to face"? Who aided Moses at his tent?

### 9. Moses and the Glory of YHWH - 33:12-23

a) In verses 12 - 17, what three things does Moses ask from God? Do you think these are unusual things to ask for? What was God's response?

b) What was Moses asking for in verse 18? What did God say He would do in response to Moses' request? What do you think is meant by the last half of verse 19?

c) Why do you think that no one may see the face of God and live?

### 10. The New Stone Tablets - 34:1-28

a) What does God instruct Moses to take with him when he goes back up on Mount Sinai?

b) When God passed in front of Moses, what did He say? Do you find anything significant about God's words? How did Moses respond?

c) What did Moses ask of God in verse 9?

d) Analyze God's response to Moses' request. How were the Israelites to treat the people who currently occupied the land? What other commands did God restate?

e) Who wrote what on the tablets? What did God call these words?

### 11. The Radiant Face of Moses - 34:29-35

How long did Moses spend this second time on the mountain? Of what were the people afraid when they saw Moses at his return? What did Moses do about it?

**Michelangelo's Moses**  
Michelangelo's statue of Moses is on display in Rome, Italy. If one looks closely, one can see what look like horns on Moses' head. These were put there by Michelangelo because of a mistranslation of **Exodus 34:29-30**. The word "shone" or "radiated" is from the Hebrew word *qaran*, meaning "he radiated." However, in the Latin Vulgate Bible of Michelangelo's time, the word was thought to be *qeren* which translates as "horns." So Michelangelo was being faithful to what he thought was an accurate translation of the Bible.



## Digging deeper . . . .

1. Can you see any connection between **Exodus 32:10** and intercessory prayer? Can you think of any other places in the Bible where a similar thing occurred?

### Scripture Link:

In **Exodus 32:32**, Moses offers himself as atonement (that is, payment) for the sin of the Israelites. God, however, does not take Moses up on his offer. Instead, “God presented the Messiah *Yeshua* as a sacrifice of atonement” (**Romans 3:25**) because of His love for us (**John 3:16**). In **John 15:13** we read, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” This is the love that Moses offered to demonstrate and that *Yeshua* actually demonstrated for us as believers.

2. Compare Moses’ offer of atonement in **Exodus 32:31-32** with the atonement provided by *Yeshua*. Why was *Yeshua*’s atonement acceptable whereas Moses’ would not have been?

3. Analyze Aaron’s part in the sin of the Golden Calf. It seems that given his position of leadership, his sin was particularly grievous. Why do you think Aaron “got off so easy”? What role do you think Hur may have played in this affair?

For further study, see

**Haftarah** : 1 Kings 18:1-39

**Brit Hadashah** : Luke 11:14-20; Acts 7:35 – 8:1;

1 Corinthians 10:1-13; 2 Corinthians 3:1-18