

# KI TISA

## • PARA



21st of 54 sedras;  
9th of 11 in Sh'mot

Written on 245.17 lines (ranks 8th)

14 Parshiot; 10 open, 4 closed

139 p'sukim (10th), 1st in Sh'mot

2002 words (5th), 1st in Shmot

7424 letters (8th), 1st in Sh'mot

Large sedra in general plus relatively long p'sukim, which explains the jump in rank from 10th for p'sukim to 5th for words. Only 4 other sedra have more than 2000 words.

## MITZVOT

9 mitzvot; 4 positives, 5 prohibitions

9 doesn't seem like very many mitzvot, but only 17 of the other 53 sedras (less than a third) have more mitzvot. At 18th on the mitzva-chart, Ki Tisa is at the bottom of the top third.

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

## Kohen - First Aliya - 45 p'sukim - 30:11-31:17

*There are three whole sedras that each have fewer p'sukim than the first Aliya of Ki Tisa (can you name them without checking?). It's the longest First Aliya in the Torah, by far (but not the longest for Monday, Thursday, and previous Shabbat Mincha reading, since we don't read all of this first Aliya at those times. Eikev's is the longest in that category, or Mas'ei according to the opinion that we should read all of the "travelog" - also something to challenge others at your Shabbat table).*

[P> 30:11 (6)] The first 6 p'sukim of the sedra are the portion of the Mitzva of the Silver Half-Shekel [105, A171 31:13], which is also read as the Maftir for Parshat Sh'kalim

## MITZVA notes

The silver half-shekel was used to count the people and to create the fund for the purchase of communal offerings throughout the year, as well as other sacred needs of the community. The half-shekel was required

of males from age 20 and up. It was optional for women. (Since the half-shekels were used to count the standing army, it was necessary to keep separate records of the optional contributions of women. Nonetheless, women could fulfill this mitzva.) Although Kohanim were also required to give a half-shekel, they were not forced by the courts in the way that non-kohanim were, as a courtesy to their standing and function in society. Sh'kalim were NOT accepted from non-Jews. (There were funds in the Beit HaMikdash to which a non-Jew could contribute, but NOT the half-shekel. It is like membership dues in Klal Yisrael - for members only.) Collection took place in Adar, so that the fund would be ready for Nissan, the beginning of the "Beit HaMikdash year".

The mitzva applies during the time of the Beit HaMikdash, when even Jews living abroad contribute(d).

Without the Beit HaMikdash, we do not perform the mitzva, but we have commemorative practices, namely the reading of Parshat Sh'kalim (on the Shabbat of or right before Rosh Chodesh Adar (Sheni), which was when Sh'kalim were "announced" through the Land) -and- the giving Zeicher L'Machatzit HaShekel before Megila reading (there is a connection between our mitzva of Sh'kalim and the sh'kalim that Haman promised the king in return for permission to

kill the Jews in the kingdom).

We can say that participation in the mitzva of the Half-Shekel indicated that a person wanted to be part of Klal Yisrael, thereby including the individual in the atonement of the People.

Remember: Today we don't give Machatzit HaShekel, we just commemorate it. This is an important distinction.

## **ZEICHER L'MACHATZIT HASHEKEL**

[P> 30:17 (5)] The next portion deals with the Laver and its stand (KIYOR V'CHANO), for the Kohanim to wash their hands and feet before their sacred Avoda [106, A204 30:19 - **the mitzva is the Washing; the making of the KIYOR is part of making the Mikdash**]. A kohen who does not wash (sanctify) his hands and feet before doing "service" in the Beit HaMikdash is liable to "death from Heaven" and the korban he has brought is invalid.

## **What might this say to us?**

Our Sages have commanded us to wash our hands before eating a bread-meal. There are several p'sukim in the Torah that are considered to be the inspiration for the mitzva to wash our hands. This is one of them, based on the famous concept that our (dining) table is like the Altar. We are challenged to elevate the mundane act of eating and invest it with a spirituality which

is the hallmark of Judaism and a Torah way of life.

Before we approach our "Altar" to serve G-d, we too wash our hands. Just like the Kohen. Well, not really. We wash hands only - not our feet. And more importantly, not with the same penalty for not washing properly (thank G-d). Could you imagine a Heavenly death penalty for not washing for HaMotzi? No. But the connection SHOULD prompt some serious reflection on our part, and hopefully, an improvement of the way we relate to this everyday mitzva - and to all mitzvot that we have.

Concerning our Netilat Yadayim, a person should examine his own observance of mitzvot. First, am I careful about washing for HaMotzi? I am? Good. Am I careful to dry my hands BEFORE washing, so that the water has its intended purpose of removing ritual impurity in the best way. And do I properly dry my hands after washing? And do I complete the bracha before my hands are completely dry? Am I careful not to speak between washing and HaMotzi? Of course. Good. I don't talk until after HaMotzi (actually, there should be no talking until after the first swallow of the first bite of the HaMotzi). But silence can also be an interruption (less severe). The point is, to THINK about what we do and why we do it, and HOW we do it. Washing for HaMotzi is an example of

a mitzva that is easy to take for granted, to go on "automatic pilot". Let's wash better, bench better, daven better, do mitzvot better, treat each other better. Let's be thinking and feeling Torah Jews all across the board.

Next follows the command to take specific quantities of various spices, mix them with olive oil, and prepare the special "anointing oil". The Kohen Gadol and kings of Israel are to be anointed with this oil [107, A35 30:31], as were the sacred vessels of the Mikdash. It is forbidden to use this oil for personal use [108, L84 30:32], or even to dare dishonor the Mikdash by copying the spiced oil recipe for personal use, is forbidden [109, L83 30:32].

[S> 30:34 (5)] We are next commanded to compound the K'toret, the incense offered twice daily in the Mikdash. The mitzva of K'toret is presented and counted in T'tzaveh; here we have the prohibition of compounding the same formula for personal use [110, L85 30:37].

[S> 31:1 (11)] G-d tells Moshe that B'tzalel shall be in charge of the actual construction and fashioning of the Mishkan and its contents. His assistant shall be Aholiav of Dan, and a team of skilled artisans shall join in the work. All the objects in and of the Mishkan are enumerated, as the task-list of B'tzalel and his team.

[P> 31:12 (6)] At this point, G-d reminds Moshe that the Shabbat may not be violated, even for the construction of the Mishkan. (We might have thought otherwise, due to the sacredness of the endeavor, hence, this reminder.) Shabbat is the eternal sign between G-d and the People of Israel.

**SDT:** Shabbat and Mikdash "rub elbows" several times in the Torah. They complement each other, in that Mikdash represents the Sanctity of Place and Shabbat represents the Sanctity of Time. One may not build the Mikdash on Shabbat, but the Shabbat "steps aside" for the Mishkan to function. And we learn many rules and details for Shabbat from the construction of the Mishkan. There is an equation of sorts, certainly a link established, with the twice-occurring pasuk - My Shabbats you shall preserve, and my Mikdash you shall revere.

**SDT:** We know that Shabbat steps aside for Piku'ach Nefesh (life-threatening situations) and for Communal Offerings in the Beit HaMikdash (and for testifying for Kidush HaChodesh). That these things are able to be done on Shabbat, we learn from specific sources in the text of the Torah. That Shabbat steps aside for ANYTHING is learned from the passage here - ACH ET SHABTOTAI TISHMORU. The word ACH - but, however - is generally considered to be limiting. My

Shabbats you shall keep, would mean, with no exceptions. ACH - indicates that there are situations when that which is usually forbidden on Shabbat is to be done. Again, what the specific things are, we learn from other p'sukim. The ACH here teaches us the general state of affairs - Shabbat can be "over-ridden", in specific cases. [Note It is not the word ACH that teaches us its meaning; it is our Oral Law that teaches us the meaning of the ACH, when it applies and when it doesn't.]

## Levi - Second Aliya - 47 p'sukim - 31:18-33:11

*The longest Second Aliya in the Torah, tied with that of Parshat Pinchas in number of p'sukim, but longer in words and letters.*

[S> 31:18 (7)] The Torah now returns to telling us of the last part of Matan Torah, which was "interrupted" (so to speak) by the parshiyot of the Mishkan, i.e. all of T'ruma and T'tzaveh and the first third of Ki Tisa. G-d gives Moshe the Tablets of stone... (meanwhile, back in the camp...) When the People saw (or thought) that Moshe was delayed in returning from Har Sinai, they feared that they would be leaderless, and they appealed to Aharon to do something. Exactly what he did is the subject of different opinions, but his delaying tactic resulted in the emergence of the

Golden Calf. Most of the people were confused and did nothing (which was part of the problem - they should have objected to the behavior of their fellows), but about 3000 men arose and reveled in the Calf, declaring it the god of Israel.

[P> 32:7 (8)] G-d told Moshe to look at what the People were doing in his (Moshe's) absence. G-d indicates to Moshe that the People are deserving of destruction.

The first part of Moshe's reaction is PRAYER. (This isn't always first on his list, but it is here. Part of the greatness of Moshe Rabeinu is his knowing when to pray long, when short, and when to take action immediately and leave prayer for later. This is something that we should try to learn from him.) His petition before G-d starts with the practical argument, "What will Egypt say?" Then Moshe mentions the Avot and asks G-d to forgive the people because of them, and the promises G-d had made to them. The combination of these two points seems to succeed, because Moshe is "rewarded" with G-d's expression of regret (so to speak) for what He had said He would do to the people. *(This parsha is the first aliya of the Torah reading for Fast days.)*

[P> 32:15 (21)] Next, Moshe turns and descends the mountain with the Luchot in his hands. When he sees the calf, the Tablets either slip from his hands and break or he intentionally

smashes them (opinions differ). He seizes the calf, destroys it, spreads its ashes over the water, and prepares a potion for the people to drink. He asks Aharon what happened.

He calls to those "who are on G-d's side"; the Leviyim rally to his call and kill those who dared "worship" the Calf.

On the following day (the exact sequence of events is debated by commentators), Moshe castigates the people, tells them of the enormity of their sin. Then he tells them that he is returning to G-d (so to speak) up the mountain, to continue pleading Israel's case before G-d. G-d promises to punish those at fault.

[S> 33:1 (11)] As a result of the Golden Calf, G-d distances Himself from the People. He does, however, reiterate His promise to give them (us) the Land. And, He tells Moshe to have the people continue towards Eretz Yisrael, but without G-d in their midst. The People are distraught by G-d's words. Moshe too removes himself and his tent from the midst of the camp. Moshe remains in direct contact with G-d... and Yehoshua was constantly in the Tent.

## Sh'lishi - Third Aliya - 5 p'sukim - 33:12-16

[P> 33:12 (5)] Moshe argues that G-d must remain in the midst of the People in order to demonstrate that He truly chose us. One senses the unique

relationship between G-d and Moshe that permits Moshe to speak to Him the way he does. At the same time that our relationship with G-d was changing because of the Golden Calf, Moshe was asking G-d for a more intimate understanding of the Divine Essence.

## **R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 7 p'sukim - 33:17-23**

[P> 33:17 (7)] G-d agrees to Moshe's request, because of His special feelings towards Moshe. Then Moshe asks that G-d reveal more of Himself to him (Moshe). G-d tells Moshe that such a revelation is impossible, but that Moshe will be able to experience more of G-d's essence. This, with the understanding that it won't be everything. The p'sukim in this portion of very enigmatic.

**Here's a thought...** Is it not strange that specifically when Bnei Yisrael is/are in the midst of a very rough time that Moshe asks G-d to reveal Himself to Moshe more than He already has? Perhaps Moshe had a bit of a "spiritual panic" in that G-d, Who had been so close to the people at Sinai was about to distance Himself from us. And Moshe feared that he too would lose out. Mixed with his efforts on behalf of the people, Moshe wants to safeguard and enhance the relationship that he has with HaShem. This will also help in his pleading for and leading the people.

## **Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 9 p'sukim - 34:1-9**

[P> 34:1 (26)] This portion (*the second and third aliyot of the reading for Fast Days*) contains the 13 Divine Attributes. One can say that not only did G-d forgive the People for the Golden Calf, but He also gave them (us) the method of approaching Him in prayer. Not only are we to recite these 13 Attributes, but we must emulate as many of them as possible. "Just as He is merciful, so too must we be merciful..." In this way we will KNOW His Attributes, live by them, and not just mechanically recite them.

G-d next tells Moshe to cut new stones to replaced the ones he has broken. Moshe again ascends Sinai to receive the Luchot, the Attributes, and Divine Forgiveness. This 40-day period - Elul through Yom Kippur, become days of special closeness between G-d and Bnei Yisrael for all times.

## **Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 34:10-26**

Our position relative to other nations is conditional upon our keeping of the mitzvot. We are forbidden to make covenants with the nations in Eretz Yisrael. Specifically, we are forbidden to eat or drink of idolatrous offerings [111 34:15 - the only mitzva counted by the Chinuch that is not on

**Rambam's list (there's one Rambam mitzva that the Chinuch doesn't count)].**

All this to avoid falling to their temptations and to avoid inter-marriage. We must destroy their idols.

We are commanded to keep Pesach in the Spring. **(This is one of the p'sukim responsible for our two Adars - 7 times in each 19-year cycle - not as rigid a pattern when we the Sanhedrin is in charge of making the Calendar.)** In a direct link to the Exodus, we have three types of B'CHOR mitzvot - human (who must be redeemed), kosher farm animals (which are given as a gift to a kohen and may not be redeemed, but are holy and to be brought as a korban), and donkey (which should be redeemed - PIDYON PETER CHAMOR, with an unpleasant, less preferred alternate).

Shavuot and Sukkot complete the cycle of the Pilgrimage Festivals; males are required to appear at the Beit HaMikdash (and not empty-handed). This mitzva (and others) guarantees our hold of the Land. Shabbat and the Land's Shabbat, Sh'mita **[112, A135 34:21]**, are mentioned.

Korban Pesach may not be brought in the Mikdash while its owner owns Chametz, nor may we leave Korban Pesach over until the morning.

Bikurim are to be brought to the Mikdash and meat-milk mixtures (that are cooked together) may not be eaten **[113, L187 34:26]**.

# MITZVA **notes**

The Torah prohibits the cooking of meat in milk, three times. We are taught that there are three prohibitions of meat and milk mixtures that are cooked together: the act of cooking meat with milk, per se, regardless of what will be done with the food, the eating of such mixtures, and the deriving benefit of any kind from such cooked mixtures. Rabbinic law further prohibited the eating of mixtures of milk and meat even if they have not been cooked.

**There is a midrash (in Midrash P'li'a) that says that when G-d told Moshe that the Written Torah would contain the prohibition of LO T'VASHEIL G'DI BACHALEIV IMO, and He explained to Moshe the laws and details of Meat in Milk which were to be transmitted to the people orally, Moshe asked G-d's permission to write LO T'VASHEIL BASAR B'CHALAV, thou shalt not cook meat in milk. [One presumes that Moshe Rabeinu foresaw that the enigmatic phrase G'DI BACHALEIV IMO might confuse some people. It would seem to some that the Torah only prohibits cooking meat in the milk of the mother of the animal from which the meat came. This is not correct - meat and milk cannot be cooked together by Torah law, even if the animals from which the meat and**

milk came didn't even know each other. This actually happens often; people do misunderstand the mitzva because of the wording.] **G-d replied to Moshe, You write these specific words! The Written Torah is intentionally worded by G-d just the way it is, and the Oral Law is the faithful transmission of the explanations of the mitzvot, as G-d taught Moshe. This is a very important part of Torah Judaism and needs constant re-enforcement. One still can ask why G-d chose a specific wording - but that is another topic.**

## **Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 9 p'sukim - 34:27-35**

[P> 34:27 (9)] G-d commands Moshe to write the Torah (and not the Oral Law and explanations, which must be transmitted orally). Moshe spent 40 days and nights on Har Sinai, not eating or drinking, during which time, the second set of Luchot were written.

When Moshe came down from the Mountain, he was unaware of the spiritual radiance that glowed on his face. Aharon and the People were afraid to approach. Moshe called to Aharon and the Leaders of the People, and spoke to them words of Torah and their explanation. Then all the people came to Moshe to be taught what G-d had spoken to him at Sinai.

When Moshe finished speaking to the people, he covered his face with a

hood (mask/veil), which he removed whenever he spoke to G-d. He would then transmit G-d's words to the people.

This would be repeated over and over again. Moshe would cover his face until the time he communicated with G-d.

## **Maftir - 2nd Torah - 22 p'sukim; Bamidbar 19**

Parshat Para is read on the Shabbat before Parshat HaChodesh which presents us with the mitzvot of Korban Pesach, because the most common and important time for ritual purification on the part of most of the people was around the beginning of Nissan, as part of one's preparation to be in Jerusalem for Pesach and to bring and eat KP. Parshat Para from Parshat Chukat, contains the mitzvot of Para Aduma - that is, the preparing of the potion from the ashes of the Red Heifer, the general mitzva of the concept of ritual impurity from contact with a corpse, and the mitzva of purifying oneself with the Para Aduma potion.

## **Haftara - 33 p'sukim - Yechezkeil 36:16-38**

*S'faradim end 2 p'sukim earlier*

The Haftara takes the concept (from the Maftir) of an individual becoming TAMEI and requiring purification with special water as an analogy for the

people of Israel who defiled themselves with the sin of idolatry and other sins, and their (our) need for a purification process with "G-d's spiritual waters of the Torah".

[In Va'eira, we find G-d's promise to take us unto Him and then He will bring us to Eretz Yisrael, in this haftara, the order is switched.]

There is a "hard" message in this haftara, among others.

G-d expresses His great disappointment with the people of Israel. And He punished them (us) very harshly. But then He says that His name was being desecrated among the nations of our dispersion, because the nations mockingly asked about the great nation of G-d and how low it had sunk.

So G-d decides, so to speak, and announces that He will redeem the people of Israel, even if they (we) don't deserve it, for His own sake.

This is hard reproach, indeed. But rather than discourage us, it should spur us on to put the lie to this prophecy - so to speak - by being worthy of redemption on our own merit.

The last p'sukim refer to a multitude of sheep - for sacrifices... This is a reminder of the large number of sheep brought to Yerushalayim for Korban Pesach.