



10 years of Points to Ponder on

Parashas Ki Sisa/Parah

**כִּ֣י תִשָּׂ֞א When you count (30:12)** – Why is the term Ki Sisa used instead of a more conventional term for counting**? Rav Moshe Feinstein .** explained that when it comes to being counted as a member of Bnei Yisrael, it is not enough to be counted but rather one must raise himself up to the standards and raise ourselves to stand proudly when we accept the responsibilities that being a part is all about.

**כִּ֣י תִשָּׂ֞א You count Bnei Yisrael (30:12**)  - Why is there such an emphasis on the counting and why must it be done in an indirect way? **Rav Berel Wein**  suggested that the Torah is highlighting n interesting idea here. Namely, the Torah wants us to know that no two Jews are exactly the same. Each of us is a number system unto ourselves n creativity. By counting directly, we would be minimizing the individual qualities and characteristics that make up the different people within Am Yisrael.

**כִּ֣י תִשָּׂ֞א Ki Tisa (30:12)** – Why do we say Tisa instead of some other word implying counting? **Divrei Yisrael** suggests that in swimming against the tide of daily living, one needs to raise his head to be able to swim against the crushing waves of the challenges of life. If one keeps his head out of the water, he will not drown. The **Avnei Nezer** explains that this is the responsibility of a parent to teach a child to swim – to give him the ability to keep his head clear of the challenges and focused on Hashem’s plans for him and the world.

**לִפְקֻֽדֵיהֶם֒**  **When you count  Bnei Yisroel according to their accounting (30:12)**– what does the Torah mean when it says “according to its numbers”?  **The Bobover Rebbe**  notes that the word “L’fikudeichem “ comes from the word for a lack (“VLo Nifkad Meemenu Ish” ). The Rebbe explains that the Torah is giving us a critical message – when we want to raise man out of his doldrums created by his enslavement to the Yetzer HaRa, then each man should give Kofer Nefesh – he should offer his life like he would have otherwise offered a Korban. The difference is that unlike a Korban, his soul can be pure and without impediment.

**וְלֹא־יִֽהְיֶ֥ה בָהֶ֛ם נֶ֖גֶף And there will not be a plague when they are counted (30:12)** – **Rav Shlomo Wolbe** . explains that normally the counting of Bnei Yisrael leads to a plague or is the means of identifying the aftereffects therein. Normally, this is the case because we are taking a nation of infinite possibilities and making their influence and destiny, finite.

**מַֽחֲצִ֥ית הַשֶּׁ֖קֶל בְּשֶׁ֣קֶל הַקֹּ֑דֶשׁ Half a Shekel (30:13)** – Why is the coin that is used for “redemption of the soul” called a Shekel? **Rav Chaim Elazar Shapiro, the Minchas Elazar .** explained that the word Shekel is also an abbreviation for the words “Shikra Lo Kai” or that lies do not last. The Minchas Elazar explained that often people believe in the lie that wealth makes the world go round. It does not. Even the wealthy need to redeem their souls.

**מִמַּֽחֲצִ֖ית הַשָּׁ֑קֶל Machatzis HaShekel (30:15)** - Why is the concept of ½ stressed here? **Rav Shlomo Alkabetz** . highlighted the idea that we are only a part of who we are without our Achdus. **Rav Binyamin Eisenberger**  notes that this idea comes from the natural concept of man not being good by himself. This is the ultimate message for the month of Adar which is designed to counteract the claim of Haman in the past -- that we are Mifuzar U’Miforad and not united.

**וְעָשִׂ֜יתָ כִּיּ֥וֹר נְח֛שֶׁת**  **And you shall make a Kiyur (30:18)**– Why is the Kiyor not included with the other Keilim? Why does it appear in Ki Sisa? The author of the **Sefer Bas Ayin** suggests that it is only after Cheit HaEigel that the concept of Tumah existed in the Mishkan. Thus, this Parsha that postdates the sin, includes a Kli called the Kiyor for once there was a Cheit and Tumah, there was a need to have a place to remove it before entering the Mikdash.

**וְעָשִׂ֜יתָ כִּיּ֥וֹר נְח֛שֶׁת**  **Kiyor (30:18)**– Why is the Kiyor’s command in this week’s Parsha instead of in Parshas Terumah with the other Klei HaMishkan? And why is it between the Parshas Machatzis HaShekel and that of Ketores? **Rav Shmuel Brazil**  explained that the style of the handwashing at the Kiyor (hand over foot) highlights the dual aspect of the Avodah service. The hand does the Avoda but the foot brings him there. It does not matter which part is longer or shorter, both are significant. The Machatzis HaShekel reminds us that no person is complete without being a part of a greater whole and the Ketores reminds us that even ingredients like the Chelbona which is foul smelling can become whole and play a role. The placing of the kiyor here reminds us that a Jew must believe that he can still have his service count even where he does not feel whole provided that he directs his Avodah fully to Hashem.

**וְנָֽתַתָּ֣ אֹת֗וֹ בֵּֽין־אֹ֤הֶל מוֹעֵד֙ וּבֵ֣ין הַמִּזְבֵּ֔חַ** **And you shall place it between Ohel Moed and the Mizbeiach (30:18)** - Wouldn’t it have made more sense to have the Kiyor in FRONT of the Mizbeiach? Let the Kohein wash and then approach the Mizbeiach. The **Shem MiShmuel** explains that when a person engages in sin, s/he needs to often go to a holy place and then to be able to return from that place. One cannot come to the understanding that since s/he is not worthy of learning or engaging in Mitzvos because of the sin, that s/he should not. Rather, one should learn that Torah and Mitzvos can bring one to a better sense of Teshuva.

וְ**חֶלְבְּנָ֔ה Chelbanah (30:34)** – One of the ingredients of the Ketores was the Chelbana which **Rashi**informs us had a foul smell to it. From the Chelbana we learn that when we daven, we must include the Poshei Yisrael. **Rav Wolbe .**asks how we are supposed to include them if it is a Mitzva to hate them? He explains that one can hate their deeds but not the people. He adds that Rav Yerucham /levovitz . would point ojut that only the greatest of Tzaddikim can hate Reshaim. The great ones have the ability to separate their disgust for the action of the wicked from the love of the person. Better one should have rachmanus on a Rasha than to hate him.

**וְחֶלְבְּנָ֔ה Chelbanah (30:34)** – One of the ingredients of the Ketores, the Chelbana, smelled bad. The Gemara uses it to symbolize the idea that we should include the Reshaim in Klal Yisrael. **Rav Schachter** quipped that this teaches us that the Rabbi should try to elevate the level of religious observance, but not keep anyone out of shul based on his or her personal level of religious observance alone.

**רְאֵ֖ה קָרָ֣אתִי בְשֵׁ֑ם בְּצַלְאֵ֛ל  Behold I have called Betzalel (31:2)** – Why does Hashem not say that he appointed Betzalel? **Rav Schachter**explained that the Talmud in Berachos learns from here that public positions of authority need appointment and acceptance by the Tzibbur. Rav Schachter quoted Rabbeinu Tam who noted that even if someone was willing to pay to become Rav or Parnas of the Tzibbur, the Kahal cannot accept it unless he is Mirutzeh LaKahal.

**רְאֵ֖ה קָרָ֣אתִי בְשֵׁ֑ם בְּצַלְאֵ֛ל  Behold I have called Betzalel (31:2**) – Nowhere in the Torah do we actually find Hashem calling Betzalel. Where does Hashem call Betzalel? **Rav Moshe Feinstein** . noted that if Hashem gives any particular talent or reserve to a person, then that IS the calling from Hashem to the person to rise to the occasion and use those talents for the betterment of Kavod Shomayim in the world.

**רְאֵ֖ה קָרָ֣אתִי בְשֵׁ֑ם בְּצַלְאֵ֛ל**  **Behold I called in the name of Betzalel (31:2)** – Why didn’t Hashem simply state that he appointed Betzalel? The Gemara in Berachos determines based on this that a position of authority needs to be Merutzeh LaKahal. **The Vilna Gaon** taught that the source for this was the concept of Shlucho Shewl Adam K’Moso. **Rav Schachter**  would often quote Rabbeinu Tam who added that the same was true for Rabbanus – a Rav cannot function or be paid from the communal funds unless he is Merutzah L’Kahal.

**רְאֵ֖ה קָרָ֣אתִי בְשֵׁ֑ם בְּצַלְאֵ֛ל בֶּן־אוּרִ֥י בֶן־ח֖וּר See I called in the name of Betzalel (31:2)** – Why do we need to “See” the call to Betzalel and why do we note his three generations to Alaliav’s 2 (him and his father)? **Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein** explains that the people needed to know that the building of the Mishkan was an atonement for the sin of the Eigel. The people did not know that their atonement as accepted until they saw that Betzalel, the grandson of the one who was murdered trying to prevent the Cheit HaEigel was going to be the chief architect on the project. Hence, they needed to see Chur’s name on the project.

**לַחְשֹׁ֖ב מַֽחֲשָׁבֹ֑ת And in the hearts of those with the wisdom of the heart I have put Chochma (31:4)** – Why give knowledge to those who already possess it? The Gemara (Berachos 55a) notes that Hashem can only give knowledge to those who already have it. But what is the point then in receiving the Chochma? **The Vilna Gaon**notes that the first bit of knowledge that a person needs is the knowledge that one needs to seek knowledge. Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz is quoted as recalling an incident when he went to visit his illustrious uncle, Rav Avrohom Jofen in Novorhodok and asked about the students. The Rosh Yeshiva proudly highlighted each student’s Maalos and where he was “the best.”  Yet, he noted one guy whom he described as the “absolute best student I have.” When Rav Chaim asked him what made that student stand out, he said “he is the biggest Mivakesh (seeker of knowledge”). That young man was Rav Yisroel Yaakov Kanievsky, the Steipler Gaon.

**אַ֥ךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַ֖י תִּשְׁמֹ֑רוּ  Just observe my Shabbos (31:13)** - My friend **Rav Aryeh Leibowitz**  is fond of quoting the **Or Hachaim** who notes that the concept of Shmira here is a reference to the idea of waiting or Tzipiyah similar to that which we find by Yaakov Aveinu who was “Shamar Es HaDavar”. Rav Leibowitz adds that there is a concept of awaiting the Shabbos all week long and thus, the entire week revolves around the Shabbos.

**כִּי֩ א֨וֹת הִ֜וא For it is a sign between me and you (31:13) – Rashi** notes the ultimate proof of our relationship with Hashem is that Hashem gave us Shabbos and in order that the rest of the nations of the world should know that I am Hashem. Why should it matter what the nations know about our relationship with Hashem? We know and He knows – why the need for the publicity? **Rav Shmuel Berenbaum .** explained that it is a de-facto position of the rest of the world to want to talk about us. They understand the concept of Am HaNivchar and revel when we do not seem to deserve or benefit from the title. That is what the Possuk comes to teach us here – if we make sure that our conversations and communications are indeed different from those of the nations of the world – when we carry ourselves as different and of a higher standard not because of obligation but rather because of who we are then the nations of the world will also get it – that we are different and aspire to more.

**כִּי֩ א֨וֹת הִ֜וא For it is a sign between me and them to know (31:12)**- What is the knowing process in regard to Shabbos? **Rav Nissan Alpert** . explained that there is no pointing to something and stating that this is Shabbos. Nothing specific is Shabbos. Shabbos is declared by us and it requires us to know that it is special.

**שַׁבַּ֧ת שַׁבָּת֛וֹן**  **On the seventh day it is a Shabbos of Shabbosos (31:15)- Rashi** notes that we need to create a Menucha that is relaxed long term not temporarily relaxing. **Rav Zevin .**points out that there are 2 types of rests. One comes from exhaustion and one is complete. The first, is merely a recharge in order to continue to forge forward while the latter comes after the job is done and man can rest fully. When it comes to Shabbos, we are commanded to see our work as completed – not a “Day Off” but rather as a completion of unit. This is the intention of the davening – Menucha Sheleima – a menucha that is only given to us but not the other nations.

**Cheit HaEigel** – **Rav Schachter**  would remind us regularly that the Gemara notes that the point of the story of the Eigel was to teach Teshuva D’Rabbim. A similar comment is made about Dovid HaMelech and that the story with Batsheva was also to teach Teshuva D’Yachid. The episode is one of the 6 Zechiros and Ramban says that is a Mitzva to remember this every year—in order to teach the message of Teshuva D’Rabbim. Why don’t we read this with the same gusto of Parshas Zachor? Mogen Avraham answers that we do not want to draw attention to the embarrassment of Am Yisrael. However he suggests that it is a responsibility to remember the episode and according to Ramban, there is a special Kiyum during the Kriyas HaTorah of this fact.

**Chet HaEigel – Rav Yaakov Ariel**  noted that the Eigel is often debated as to what the sin was. He explains that the Eigel was representative of the celebration of middle steps. It involved focusing on the calf instead of who was leading it, gold instead of what its purchasing power was. The focus on stopping to rest on half-jobs is a sin.

**כִּֽי בשֵׁ֥שׁ משֶׁ֖ה Moshe was late (32:1) – Rav Yisrael Salanter .** noted that this is the introduction to the story of the Eigel. When the Yetzer HaRa finds even the smallest crack to enter, he can push his way in and create havoc. We need to stand strong against it in order to be successful.

**כִּֽי בשֵׁ֥שׁ משֶׁ֖ה The nation saw that Moshe delayed in coming down from the mountain (32:1) – Rav Simcha Zissel**of Kelm notes that the Cheit HaEigel happened when Bnei Yisrael thought Moshe was late and then they panicked. Panic causes people to make rash decisions that they would not ordinarily make when things are calm. The rush to do something and ask questions for understanding later are often a sure-fire way to sin. **Rav Yaakov Moshe Katz**  adds that there are three lessons to learn from the Parsha: a)  to realize that there is always a solution to our problems, a way to repair the difficulty in which we find ourselves, b)  not to panic, but to consider the situation carefully before reacting.  C)  to daven to Hashem to help us find the most effective way of dealing with the situation.

**כִּֽי בשֵׁ֥שׁ משֶׁ֖ה** **The nation saw that Moshe was delayed (32:1) - Rashi** writes that it was Moshe’s delay that led the people into a frenzy and they rushed to rumor that Moshe had died. **Rav Dr. Yaakov Greenwald**  explains that one of the common mistakes that a person makes is in thinking that a response to a personal challenge and crisis must be immediate even if it sacrifices clear thinking. This is an error. If people take a moment to “sleep” on things, allowing cooler heads to prevail, things often work out better. **Rav Yisrael Reisman**  added that we find the Gemara underscoring this idea. Sometimes the Gemara will raise a question on a view that we accept Halachically. The Gemara will answer with the claim of “Kashya” noting that while the question is indeed a good one, it does not change the Halacha. Similarly, not every life challenge has an easy answer but we do not rush to an answer we will likely regret.

**אֵ֤לֶּה אֱלֹהֶ֨יךָ֙ יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל This is your God Yisrael that took you out of Egypt (32:4 )**- The Midrash comments that in the same way it was good for our forefathers to receive the Torah and say Naaseh V’Nishma perhaps it was good for them to declare “this is your God Yisrael”? That is a troubling idea.  Why would the midrash make such a troubling comparison between 2 seemingly isolated declarations? **Rav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht .** noted that the connection between them was in the Hislahavus. The inspiration for the positive was also the driving force behind the negative. Hislahavus is a great thing when it is harnessed to a solid goal and focus. Unbridled Hislahavus can be destructive and can destroy many futures.

**לֶךְ־רֵ֕ד Go down quickly (32:7)** – When the story is repeated in Devarim (9:12) we also see that the word quickly is used. Why is it so important that Moshe go down quickly? **Rav Zaidel Epstein .** notes that the timing of treatment often affects its ability to be effective. (The drug Tamiflu has to be administrated in the first 2 days of contracting the flu to be effective) If it is true for physical illness, it is true for spiritual illness too. Moshe was holding the vaccine for the spreading virus of the Eigel. He needed to administer it in order to be able to save the nation. That process begins with doing so in a timely manner.

**לֶךְ־רֵ֕ד Go down because your nation has become corrupt (32:7)**– Why is the nation all of a sudden referred to as Moshe’s and not Hashem’s? Rashi tells us that the nation here refers to the Eirev Rav. **Rav Schachter**  noted in the name of the Gra that in the generation of Moshiach there will be more trouble from the Eirev Rav. Rav Schachter noted that today’s Eirev Rav are those who are Migaleh Torah Shelo K’Halacha. Rav Schachter would remind us often that the Rambam’s Hilchos Mamrim begins with a respect for the authority contained in the Halachic process.

**עַם־קְשֵׁה־עֹ֖רֶף  Behold they are Ksheh Oref (32:9)-** The term literally means that they are stiff necked. What does their neck condition have to do with their status? **Rav Aharon Soloveitchik .** explained that the term refers not to a sense of stubbornness but rather narrow-mindedness – a limited sense of vision. Bnei Yisrael could not see how their survival was going to be possible without Moshe. Had they simply turned their necks around, they would have seen Har Sinai and recalled the experience and known that they could withstand any challenge.

**אֲשֶׁ֤ר הוֹצֵ֨אתָ֙ מֵאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרַ֔יִם That you have taken out of Mitzrayim (32:11)** - When Moshe pleaded with Hashem in defense of the Jewish people, he invokes the fact that Hashem had just taken them out of Mitzrayim. The Midrash comments that Moshe argued that the people were still young and uneducated. He asked Hashem to give the people a chance to learn Torah and value it before punishing them. **Rav Pam**  added that the same can be said of our generation as well. We seem to be suffering from a spiritual lack of awareness where a Torah life seems to have no meaning to us. Yet, if we demonstrate a willingness to reach out to the people and a desire to let them experience the light of Torah, then we can help the entire nation grow.

**וְהַ֨לֻּחֹ֔ת  The Luchos were creations of Hashem and the writing, the writing of Hashem imposed on the Luchos (32:15)** – Why mention the grandeur of the Luchos now and not when they were given to Moshe? The **Shemen Hatov** suggests that prior to destroying something, one needs to contemplate the loss. Once destroying, one really appreciates that which he beholds and is about to lose. At the same time, despite the preciousness, Moshe saw he needed to destroy them and did not hesitate to do so – hence the Torah’s stress on their grandeur in order to show us the greatness of the decision to destroy them. **Rav Frand**  added that we need to do that with our youth and our elders --- we need to appreciate them while we still have them.

**יִּתֵּ֣ן אֶל־משֶׁ֗ה כְּכַלֹּתוֹ֙ לְדַבֵּ֤ר אִתּוֹ֙  He gave Moshe when he was finished speaking to him (32:15)-** **Rashi** explains that this is written חסר to note that the relationship was still new like that of a Chosson and a Kallah – for Moshe had not mastered Torah as yet. The Midrash adds that in the end, Hashem gave it to Moshe as a gift. The Meforshim ask that if Torah was going to be a gift, why did Moshe have to sit over it for 40 day? **Chiddushei HaRim** explains that only through the hard work can someone actually really absorb the Torah.

**וּשְׁנֵ֛י לֻחֹ֥ת הָֽעֵדֻ֖ת בְּיָד֑וֹ לֻחֹ֗ת כְּתֻבִים֙ מִשְּׁנֵ֣י עֶבְרֵיהֶ֔ם מִזֶּ֥ה וּמִזֶּ֖ה הֵ֥ם כְּתֻבִֽים He gave to Moshe when He had finished speaking with him upon Har Sinai 2 Luchos (32:15) – Rashi** explains that the word Luchos is spelled in the singular because they were both alike like one. **Rav Moshe Feinstein** adds that many people mistake the idea that the division of the Luchos into Bein Adam L’Makom and Bein Adam l’Chaveiro means that they are mutually exclusive but they are interdependent. Torah cannot be looked at in the person’s own rationale and emotions. S/he needs to realize that even the values and sensibilities of interpersonal relations are in the realm of the will of Hashem.

**ק֣וֹל עַנּ֔וֹת**  **There is no sounds of victory or weakness just the sounds of voices (32:18)** – Responding to someone who complained to **Dayan Weiss .** about the purposelessness of protests, he responded that Moshe didn’t hear voices of victory or defeat. One can infer that had Moshe at least heard people protest he would not have needed to break the Luchos to show the people the error of their ways.

**ק֣וֹל עַנּ֔וֹת**  **He said that he hears not the voice of strength nor the voices of weakness, just the Kol Anos (32:18)** – **Ramban** comments that Moshe was showing Yehoshua that one need not hear sounds but rather needs to learn to distinguish between them**. Rav Wolbe** . adds that that a leader needs to be able to distinguish between the sounds of war and the sounds of sichok.  Perhaps one can suggest that the sounds of Sichok come when it is merely Anos – just to respond to responses. There is no goal except to respond and destroy.

**ק֣וֹל עַנּ֔וֹת  The voice of rebellion I hear (32:18) – Rav Elyashiv .** points out that there are many different voices – those of strength and of weaknes but there is one type of voice that is stronger than the others --- the one of Anochi. For when one thinks only about himself it brings about the situation wherein  the Luchos get broken. Similar to HaBen Yakir Lee Efraim. The beloved son becomes a rebellious child when the Kavod enters the picture. That sets in, and removes a person from the world.

**אֵ֥ין קוֹל֙ עֲנ֣וֹת גְּבוּרָ֔ה וְאֵ֥ין ק֖וֹל עֲנ֣וֹת חֲלוּשָׁ֑ה  That is not the sounds of strength or of weakness (32:18) – Rashi** explained that the sounds were not ones of victory nor of defeat but rather noises of blasphemy. Why does Moshe not simply say that these were noises of Blasphemy? **Rav Nebenzahl**  explained that after Matan Torah the people had achieved a status wherein no nation could rule them. Therefore, Moshe pointed out to Yehoshua that as a future leader, he needed to know that after Matan Torah, a noise of war could not be war, it needed to be something else—worse.

**וַיְשַׁבֵּ֥ר אֹתָ֖ם תַּ֥חַת הָהָֽר And he broke them under the mountain (32:19)** – Why did Moshe break the Luchos? After all, it was only the Erev Rav that worshipped the golden Eigel? Why did Moshe punish the entire nation? And what would breaking the Luchos do for the process? **Rav Shaul Yisraeli** . suggests that while true, the authentic Jews did not worship the Eigel, they did not do anything to stop it. The same nation that declared Naaseh V’Nishma thought it was enough to separate from a group that tried to pervert the Torah and its values. This was not the Torah way. The same Torah that demands that we stand up for it, demands that it be held to high esteem in the midst of even the neighbors living among us.

**וַיְשַׁבֵּ֥ר אֹתָ֖ם תַּ֥חַת הָהָֽר He smashed the Luchos under the mountain (32:19)**– After hearing about the Eigel from Hashem and hearing the sounds and still bringing the Luchos with him, what led Moshe to smash the Luchos when he did? **Rav Haim Sabato**  quoted **Rav Goldvicht .** in the name **of Rav Hutner** . who explained that the difficulty that Moshe had was the thought that they could have the Luchos and still revel in the Avoda Zara. It was the dancing, that showed that the people fully identified with their act. That being the case, Moshe had no choice but to smash the Luchos – comfort with Avodah Zara cannot be coupled with the acceptance of the word of Hashem.

**וַיְשַׁבֵּ֥ר אֹתָ֖ם תַּ֥חַת הָהָֽר And he saw the Eigel and the frivolity..and he broke the Luchos (32:19)**– Hashem had already told Moshe about the terrible Avaira of the Eigel. Why did Moshe smash the Luchos when he SAW he people? **Rav Shalom Schwadron .** explains that when he heard that the people had sinned, Moshe thought that there was still hope that the people could be shown the error of their ways. However, when he saw the frivolity, he knew that this hope was lost.

**כִּֽי־הֵבֵ֥אתָ עָלָ֖יו חֲטָאָ֥ה גְדֹלָֽה Moshe said to Aharon what did this nation do to you that you brought on them a great sin (32:21)** – How could it be that the very same Aharon who was involved in the Eigel would later serve as Kohein Gadol, the one destined to save the people and help them atone for the Eigel? **Rav Belsky .**  explains that based on the Gemara in Yoma (69b) about the nullification of the Yetzer HaRa for Avoda Zara in the time of Ezra, Nehemia and Zechariah HaNovi, it can be suggested that the same was true for Aharon who also sought to be Mivatel the Yetzer for Avoda Zara. However, whereas in the time of Zechariah Hashem accepted the nullification, he was not ready to cede the power of Nevuah that would need to be traded with the Yetzer for Avoda Zara. Aharon attempted a maneuver that as risky and ultimately put him into great peril. One so selfless certainly deserves to be a kohein for the people.

**כִּֽי־פְרָעֹ֣ה אַֽהֲרֹ֔ן  For Aharon exposed the nation to disgrace amongst those who would rise up against them (32:25)** – The role of Aharon in the Eigel is the subject of much debate in the commentaries. On the one hand, Aharon clearly played a big role in the eigel but he does not seem to be punished the way the others were. How does this make sense**? Rav Yisrael Belsky**  suggests that Aharon’s desire was similar to that of the Anshei Knesses HaGedola as identified in Yoma (69b). There, the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah were able to banish the Yitzra D’Avoda Zara. Aharon had wanted to do the same thing (See Rashi to 32:23). However, in his case it was not the time to undertake the attempt. He failed and the Eigel resulted. But he was not to be punished with the Ovdei Avoda Zara for it.

**וַיֹּ֕אמֶר מִ֥י לַֽה אֵלָ֑י** **Who is for Hashem join me (32:26) – The Zohar HaKadosh** identifies part of the sin of the Eigel in the words of the people, **אלה**אלהיך ישראל.  The Zohar notes that the people quantified the concept of Godliness and as a result limited the influence of Hashem in our world. **Rav Yaakov Nagen**  added that the antidote was Moshe’s use of the words **מי** לה' אלי. מי is indicative of a relationship that transcends a series of questions. I know who the other is, even though I cannot answer every single issue. Trust, belief and Love work in transcendental ways as well. When you know the relationship but realize that its depth surpasses quantitative calculation, you have made it about who and not about what. When that exists with Hashem, it fosters Emunah and prevents sin.

**וַיֹּ֕אמֶר מִ֥י לַֽה אֵלָ֑י** **Who is for Hashem should come to me and the entire tribe of Levi gathered around him (32:26)** – There were many others who were not idol worshippers. Why did Shevet Levi serve as the only ones who came forward**? Rav Yitzchak Adlerstein**  suggested that Moshe only wanted the elite because the mission of this group was to be frought with danger. At the same time, while many were qualified, Moshe feared anyone having anything that could be mislabeled as ulterior motives, in killing a fellow Jew. Therefore, he only took from Levi.

**אַתֶּ֥ם חֲטָאתֶ֖ם חֲטָאָ֣ה גְדֹלָ֑ה** **And it was on the next day Moshe told the people that they had sinned a serious sin (32:30) – Rashi**comments that Moshe wanted to place a gap between the people and their sin. **Sforno** adds that the Jews had done Teshuvah for their sin. Why then was the gap necessary? **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz .** explains that even after Teshuva there is an inclination to return to the sin . This is part of the concept of Shana Bah Hutra Lo. The gap is necessary to undo the sinning habit.

**אָ֣נָּ֗א חָטָ֞א הָעָ֤ם הַזֶּה֙ חֲטָאָ֣ה גְדֹלָ֔ה This nation sinned a big sin (32:31)** – Why would Moshe call the sin a big sin? Wouldn’t Hashem treat that as exceptionally bad? The **Kedushas Tzion of Bobov** explained that sins are considered big if they are done by people who are otherwise Tzaddikim. By calling the sin “big” Moshe was going to backdoor the idea that Hashem should forgive the people because they were otherwise Tzaddikim and thus, worthy of his mercy.

**כִּ֛י לֹֽא־יִרְאַ֥נִי הָֽאָדָ֖ם וָחָֽי**: **You cannot see my face for no one has ever seen my face and survived (33:20)** – Why can no one see the face of Hashem and live**? Rav Efrayim Greenblatt .** notes that although Moshe spoke to Hashem face to face, he did not see Hashem. For to see Hashem is to become angelic (angel-like?) and angels do not live – they do not choose. One needs to have the ability to choose if s/he is to thrive in a life of good choices.

**וְרָאִ֖יתָ אֶת־אֲחֹרָ֑י וּפָנַ֖י לֹ֥א יֵֽרָאֽוּ: You will see my back but not my front (33:23)** – Didn’t Hashem just tell us that He would speak with Moshe face to face? Which is it?  **Rav Yaakov Medan**  suggests that the difference was whether Moshe was in the camp or whether he was alone. Prior to Cheit HaEigel (and when Moshe was not in the camp) Hashem was easy to reach. Bnei Yisrael experienced divine revelation easily and somewhat effortlessly. After the Cheit HaEigel they were on a lower level and had to run after Hashem in order to seek Him. This is the intent of the Possuk here – you can try to catch me but you will need to work hard and run to catch even the back glimpses.

**וְרָאִ֖יתָ אֶת־אֲחֹרָ֑י You will see my back (33:23)** - Rashi explains that Hashem showed Moshe the knot of His tefillin. How does this explain or display the way of Hashem? The Lubavitcher Rebbe explained that Hashem was showing Moshe that it was important to daven. He reminded Moshe that sin occurs because of Heisech HaDaas. Tefillin represents the opposite. When a person wears his tefillin properly, he remembers that he is in the presence of Hashem and prepares and conducts himself accordingly.

**רָאִ֖יתָ אֶת־אֲחֹרָ֑י וּפָנַ֖י לֹ֥א יֵֽרָאֽוּ: You will see my back but my front will not be seen (33:23)**– What is the back and the front? **Rav Elimelech Biderman**  notes that the Torah is telling us that sometimes we do not understand Hashem’s plans for us until it is complete. In the moment we do not get it. But we can see it only later. He likens the situation to a visitor to the cockpit of a plane who enters and sees a lot of buttons and switches and immediately points to one and asks the captain “what does this one do?” The captain asks him why he is interested in the specifics of one button without awareness about what the others do in unison. The same is true with Hashem –  <When you look at the specifics without the picture you can easily become a fool>. **Rav Schachter**  would often remind us that this is what happens when we say Brachamim U’B’Ratzon – that our Tefillos should be accepted with the will of Hashem. He noted in the name of **Rav Soloveitchik** . that he would often daven to Hashem not to have to leave Europe and Baruch Hashem those Tefillos were not accepted. Sometimes we do not get it in the moment but in the long run…

וְ**אִם־אַ֕יִן מְחֵ֣נִי נָ֔א If not, erase me from the book that you have written (32:32) – Rav Soloveitchik .** noted that the Rebbe ensures the survival of the Jewish people. The ultimate criterion for a Rebbe is the willingness to engage in Mesiras Nefesh (self-sacrifice) for his students. When Moshe showed that willingness, he became that model for all future Rebbes.

**גַּם־הַצֹּ֤אן וְהַבָּקָר֙ אַל־יִרְע֔וּ The sheep and the cattle shall not graze (34:3) – Rema** notes the custom some have to put out grass and flowers in their synagogues on Shavuos. **Rav Dan Segel**  noted that this was not a mistake but rather the environment of Torah, with the grasses and the flowers all add the aesthetic element to the spirit of Torah.

**וַיַּֽעֲבֹ֨ר ה | עַל־פָּנָיו֘  Hashem passed before him and declared “Hashem Hashem (34:6)** – The Talmud (Rosh Hashana 17b) tells us that before teaching Moshe the secret of the 13 Middos, Hashem appeared as a Shaliach Tzibbur. Why did he need to do that? **Imrei Binah**, suggests that this hints to us that even according to the opinion that it is enough to merely say the words, one must say them like a Shaliach Tzibbur. In יש בער לא ידע וכסיל לא יבין את זאת other words, it is insufficient to recite the י"ג מידות on behalf of ourselves; we must invoke them with the welfare of the entire community in mind. When we cry out with all our might pleading with Hashem to tear up any evil decrees against us, instead of only focusing on our own needs, we must endeavor to pray as a Shaliach Tzibbur by magnanimously moving outside ourselves and also focusing on the needs of others. **Rav Yissochar Frand**   notes that to combat the natural tendency to think only of ourselves, the sefer **Mikdash Mordechai** comments  Hashem first descended in a cloud. This teaches us that when life is going well, it is easy to think about others. However, when a person feels like he is inside of a tumultuous cloud, grappling with his own overwhelming struggles, it is much more challenging to do so. Therefore, Hashem specifically approached Moshe in a cloud to hint that even at such times, we are expected to selflessly empathize with others and pray on their behalf, an act which is guaranteed to merit Hashem’s mercy and compassion.

**כִּ֤י עַם־קְשֵׁה־עֹ֨רֶף֙ ה֔וּא Because they are a stiff-necked people (34:9)** – Earlier the people were accused and prosecuted for being stiff necked (32:9). Why would the same phrase be used in the context of defense of the people if it was the basic argument of the prosecution? **Rav Yisrael Meir Lau** explained that it simply depends on how you channel this trait. Stubborness in the sense of insisting on something sounds negative like insisting on arguing, insisting on being stubborn, not willing to accept authority or to listen to others, not willing to take on any duties or responsibilities, that’s stubborn in the negative context. A stubborn people however, can reflect having a strong spine, having character, strong values, principles that one insists on having and insisting on fulfilling those values and principles. Moshe defends Am Yisrael not by saying to Hashem to have mercy on Am Yisrael despite fact we are a stiff necked people, rather have mercy on us because we are a stiff necked people-.עם קשה עורף הוא . Specifically the people who have suffered more than others, who have been exiled more than others are the only ones who have survived; and why is that? Because when the Jewish people needed to they had the tough spine and determination when they needed to and stuck to their values.

**וְרָאָ֣ה כָל־הָ֠עָ֠ם אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּ֨ה בְקִרְבּ֜וֹ** **And the whole nation that you are in shall see the great things Hashem does with you (34:10) - Ramban**holds that he is not sure if the remembrance of the Cheit HaEigel is for the future or only for the generation itself. Why should we remember the sin? What good is the guilty complex? The Gemara (Avoda Zara) explains that the point of the Eigel was to teach us the concept of Teshuva D’Rabim.  **Rav Schachter**  would often quote the Mogen Avraham who adds that there is a Mitzva to read the Parsha of Cheit HaEigel in the same way that we read Parshas Zachor. The point of this reading is to remember that even if we do the worst Avaira in the world there is a hope of Teshuva if we do Teshuva properly. Why do we not make the big deal that we do about Zachor, with an announcement and the big rush to Shul? Rav Schachter added that announcements bring an embarrassment to life so we do not highlight it with Yotzros and special Haftaros but the obligation to read and remember still remains.

**אֱלֹהֵ֥י מַסֵּכָ֖ה לֹ֥א תַֽעֲשֶׂה־לָּֽךְ Foreign idols you should not make but you should observe Pesach (34:17-18)** – What is the connection between these sections? **Rav Mordechai Gifter** explained that together with the Halachos about not cleaving to Goyim we have the connection to Pesach which is the active Mitzva of Emunah and our chance to connect to Hashem.

**לֹֽא־יַחְמֹ֥ד אִישׁ֙ אֶת־אַרְצְךָ֔ No one shall desire your land (34:24)** – This is not the first mention of the Mitzva of Aliyah L’Regel. Why does the Torah wat until now to tell us of the promise that no one will desire your land? **Rav Yonasan David**  explains that in the same way that Ibn Ezra notes that the prohibition of Lo Tachmod means that it will not be within the realm of expectation to desire what does not belong to another, Hashem promises that as a result of the spiritual searching of all of the people rising to the occasion of Aliyah L’Regel and the raising of the spiritual sense that such an action will bring throughout the land, the non-Jewish nations will not be able to relate to the beauty and will not desire the land.

**לֹֽא־יַחְמֹ֥ד אִישׁ֙ אֶת־אַרְצְךָ֔ And no man shall desire your land when you go up to Aliya L’Regel (34:24) – Rav Meir Shapiro .** points out that the vacation of Aliyah L’Regel is not for an appreciation of the physical beauty of the city of Yirushalayim but rather for its spiritual beauty. That is the intention of the Torah when it notes that no one will desire “your land” for after all, everyone wants Yirushalayim. Instead, the intention is for the nature (Pesachim 8b no Peiros Ginosar in Jerusalem so that the Aliyah L’Regel would not be tainted by ulterior motives.

**לֹֽא־יַחְמֹ֥ד אִישׁ֙ אֶת־אַרְצְךָ֔ No one will desire your land when you go up to Aliya l’Regel (34:24) – Rav Meir Shapiro** . noted that Chimud would not affect anyone travelling up to the land – that the sole purpose in Aliya L’regel would be for the soul. That is to say, one is not supposed to make Aliyah L’regel for physical benefit –rather for Spiritual purpose. That said, if done right, the physical would be taken care of.

**כִּ֞י עַל־פִּ֣י | הַדְּבָרִ֣ים הָאֵ֗לֶּה כָּרַ֧תִּי אִתְּךָ֛ בְּרִ֖ית וְאֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵֽל:** **For based on these things I erected a covenant with the Jewish people (34:27)** – The Talmud tells us that “These words” refers to the Torah She’Bal Peh. **Rav Shaul Yisraeli .** explained that in regard to Torah SheB’Ksav, it can be regaled and placed into an ark and left alone in an honored place. However, the only place for Torah She’Baal Peh is inside each and every person committed to it. Torah She’Baal Peh regulates the entirety of a person’s life. Therefore, the only Bris with Yisrael is the one each of us buys into--- Torah SheBaal Peh.

**כְּתָב־לְךָ֖ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִ֣ים הָאֵ֑לֶּה  Write these things down (34:27)** - The Gemara (Gitin 60a) uses this possuk to highlight the fact that there will be both a written and an oral Torah. While the written Torah was made available to the nations of the world in the time of Yehoshua, the Torah She’Baal Peh was not. The same *possuk* also implies that the written Torah should not be recited from memory, rather it should only be read from a *sefer*. Similarly, the oral Torah may not be read from a *sefer* and must be recited by heart. The ***baalei haTosafos*** (*[Temurah](https://www.sefaria.org/Temurah.14b?lang=he-en&utm_source=torahweb.org&utm_medium=sefaria_linker)* [14b](https://www.sefaria.org/Temurah.14b?lang=he-en&utm_source=torahweb.org&utm_medium=sefaria_linker)) ask why we say so many sections of the Torah by heart? **Tosafos** explains that this *halacha* only applies to a *ba'al koreh*, who may not recite *kerias haTorah* by heart when he is reading on behalf of the *tzibbur*. What about the writing of the Torah SheBaal Peh? Why are we allowed to write that down? **Rav Schachter**  quoted from **Sefer Yereim**  who explains that the *Chachomim* never meant to say that one is violating an *aveira* if he teaches Torah *Shebaal Peh* to others from a written text. Rather the *Chachomim* were saying that the *mitzvah beshleimusa* of teaching Torah to others can only be fulfilled if you teach it orally. If one transmits Torah *Shebaal Peh* from a text he is only fulfilling the *mitzvah* in an incomplete manner. So when the *Chachomim* recorded the *Mishnayos* and the *Gemorah* to serve as the text for the later generations, no *aveira* was violated but it is only that we are fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *talmud* Torah *shelo beshleimusa*.

**וּמשֶׁ֣ה לֹֽא־יָדַ֗ע כִּ֥י קָרַ֛ן ע֥וֹר פָּנָ֖יו His face shone (34:29)** – The **Yalkut Shimoni** notes that Moshe got the “light” on his face from the extra ink in his quill after writing the Torah. **Rav Schachter**  explained that when a person teaches and writes, the majority of his teaching is still inside of him. The gadlus that a person demonstrates is but a fraction of the person that he is. Hence, he still has a shine from this aspect of his Torah which is inside him.

**וּמשֶׁ֣ה לֹֽא־יָדַ֗ע כִּ֥י קָרַ֛ן ע֥וֹר פָּנָ֖יו Moshe did not realize that his face had begun to shine (34:29) –** Why did his face shine particularly when the second Luchos were given? **Rav Nisson Alpert .** explained that the covenant for the second Luchos was for the Torah She’Baal Peh which needs a mesorah and a Rebbe to be studied properly. When it comes to Torah She’Baal Peh one needs to learn and study from every aspect of the Rebbe’s being, each action or facial expression shines as did Moshe. Rav Soloveitchik . noted that it was the Kedushas Haguf that enveloped Moshe when he assumed the mantle of rebbe that led him to be shining always.

**וַיִּֽירְא֖וּ מִגֶּ֥שֶׁת אֵלָֽיו** **And Aharon saw that Moshe’s face lit up and the people were afraid to approach him (34:30)** **– Rashi** notes that this was due to their sense of inadequacy over sin**. Rav Wolbe** . notes that the fear came from a misunderstanding about Torah. Torah is a power that lifts a person up and brings him into a spiritual world. When we bring Torah into our world instead of trying to live in its world, it brings on fears – including religious obsessions.

**Parshas Parah**

**זֹ֚את חֻקַּ֣ת הַתּוֹרָ֔ה  This is the Chok of the Torah (Bamidbar 19:2)** – Why is Parah Aduma referred to as a Chok? **Rav Moshe Wolfson quoted Rav Gedaliah Shorr** . who explained that every Mitzva has a unique aspect to it which is then found in a different, minor form, in other Mitzvos. Parah Aduma’s unique component is that it is a Chok – without a reason. Whenever we find that concept in some aspect of all other Mitzvos, we know it comes from Parah Aduma.

**זֹ֚את חֻקַּ֣ת הַתּוֹרָ֔ה Parshas Parah – Zos Chukas Hatorah (Bamidbar 19:2)** – The Shulchan Aruch (OC 685:7) notes that according to many, the reading of Parshas Parah is a biblical commandment. Where is there a hint to this idea? **Rav Schwab** explained that the fact that the Chukas Hatorah is listed and then the words, “Daber El Bnei Yisrael” hints that even the speaking to Bnei Yisrael is a Chok in the torah.

**Haftara –**

**The miracle at Har HaCarmel**– Eliyahu and Elisha were capable of performing many miracles. We do not find Yirmiyahu and Yeshayahu performing major miracles. **Rav Dovid Povarsky .** explains that while the Neviim who worked outside of Yirushalayim needed the miracles in orde to demonstrate that they were indeed Shluchim of Hashem, those who were in Yirushalayim didn’t need the miracles because they were apparent just from being near the Beis HaMikdash.

**When Achav saw Eliyahu he asked him if he were the destroyer of Yisrael. Eliyahu answered that I am not the destroyer but rather it is you (Melachim Alef 18) – Rav Moshe Stav**  pointed out that Eliyahu is one of the most difficult Neviim to understand. In his day, he was clearly not popular and yet, he is the one saddled with the opportunity to reveal the impending Geulah. Why? Rav Stav explained that Eliyahu’s primary mode of prophesy was Kanaut. A Kanai is not always popular in the moment in that Kannaut is an unshakable, internal bonding to truth irrespective of Chessed in the moment. Thus, Eliyahu’s Emes remains and stands the test of time but the need of the moment proves elusive (as is clear in the episode  when he is at Har Sinai). Similarly it can be noted that Hashem combines the Rav Chessed with Emes.

**How long will you pass on two opposing sides? If you shall side with Hashem side with him and if with the Baal, so follow Baal? (Melachim I )** – How could Eliyahu HaNovi suggest that Jews choose Baal? Isn’t the choice one of sending Jews away from Hashem? Isn’t there a middle ground? **Rav Pam . quoted Rav Chaim Soloveitchik .** who explained that the choice is not a partial one. One cannot have faith in Hashem AND Baal. So by choosing Baal, a Jew is choosing not Hashem. As he famously quipped: “A Shtikle Apikorses is a complete Apikores.”

**They should give us 2 bulls (I Kings 18:24)** – Why does he use the word שנים instead of the more correct שני פרים**? Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky .** explains that Eliyahu wanted the bulls to be exactly the same – as the Midrash notes – they were to be a set of twins from the same mother raised in the same manner in order for the proof of the glory of Hashem to be complete. Remember, the bull that was to be used by the prophets of Baal was so distraught, it did not want to go until Eliyahu convinced it that it too, was part of the Kiddush Hashem to be made at Har HaCarmel.

**וַ֠יִּקְחוּ אֶת־הַפָּ֨ר אֲשֶׁר־נָתַ֣ן לָהֶם֘  They took the bull that he gave them (Melachim Alef 18:26)** – Eliyahu didn’t give them the bull, they CHOSE it? Why does the text change that fact? **Rashi** notes that the bull chosen by the Baal “Prophets” refused to go along with them. He did not want to be a sacrifice to Avoda Zara. The 450 prophets could not subdue it. Eliyahu told the bull that it too, was part of the Kiddush Hashem and it relented. **Rav Dovid Feinstein .** noted that since it submitted only due to Eliyahu, it was as if he gave it to them.

**Eliyahu at Har HaCarmel and is answered at Mincha (Melachim I: 18:36) Rav Schachter**noted the Gemara (6b) that reminds us how important we need to prioritize Mincha for Eliyahu was answered at Mincha Time. Rav Schachter asked why Mincha was more important to be careful with than Shachris/ He explained that the 2 Tefillos represent 2 halves of the Korban haTamid and the Chochmei HaKabbalah parallel the Shachris half with man’s necessities and the Mincha with luxuries. Eiyahu was noting that although Hashem can be somewhat forgiving for forgetting to be Modeh on the necessities, the luxuries in life require us to offer thanks to Hashem for them. Forgetting to do so is a serious difficulty.

**Haftara Parashas Parah**

**Son of man! The house of Israel, as long as they lived on their own land, they defiled it by their way and by their misdeeds, like the uncleanness of a woman in the period of her separation was their way before me. (Yechezkel 36:17)** – Why does the Novi refer to sins and misdeeds at the beginning of the Possuk and later – in the context of Niddah merely refer to the “way” of sin? **Rav Yaakov Krantz,** famed Dubno Maggid explains that there is a difference between a Derech and misdeeds. The Derech refers to premeditated thought, which although hidden from our fellow man is revealed to Hashem. Misdeeds are seen by all. Many Aveiros Bein adam L’Makom tend to be in thought while Bein Adam L’Chaveiro are always revealed. While Hashem knows of both types of Aveiros, and both defile the land, the Bein Adam L’Chavero – revealed actions lead to the galus.

**וְנָתַתִּ֚י לָכֶם֙ לֵ֣ב חָדָ֔שׁ I will give you a new heart (Yechezkel 36:26) – Rav Shalom Carmy**  contrasts the new heart in this Haftara with the single heart Yechezkel speaks about in chapter 11. Here, Yechezkel recognizes that Hashem punished Bnei Yisrael due to their disobedience. Now, He is confronting them about their dependence on Him. On the one hand, He can wipe away their Tumah which they, themselves cannot and at the same time, we need a new attitude to recognize that our way of dealing with Him, does not work – and that we need a new way of approaching Him together.

**כַּצֹּ֖אן אָדָֽם** **This is what I shall seek for Bnei Yisrael I will make you as great as the sheep of man (Yechezkel 36:37-38) - Rav Yigal Ariel**  explained that the land of Israel and even the cities (which have the people) are really only the shells that contain the potential for Kedusha. It is the combination of the two -- the nation and the land (symbolized by the people and the sheep) that reveal the true Kedusha of the land. Basing himself on the writings of Rav Kook, Rav Ariel explains that it is the combination of the individual and the group (man and sheep) that unite the ultimate kedusha of man on the land.

The Haftarah presents a different type of impurity than presented in the Torah reading. Rav Soloveitchik distinguished between the Tumah (impurity) described in the Parasha, caused by death (contracted through contact with a corpse or remaining under the same roof as a corpse) and all other forms of halachic impurity. Firstly, death requires complete separation of a kohen, even from his own spouse. Yechezkel begins his prophecy by evoking the imagery of the Nidda rather than death, to underscore that Hashem continues to dwell with Bnei Yisrael even in their defilement, as a husband, even if he is a Kohen, remains with his wife throughout the period of separation. Secondly, in all cases, except for death, purification is achieved through self-immersion in a mikveh, not requiring the participation of others in the process. The person who has encountered death may only be purified through the kohen sprinkling the water containing the red heifer’s ashes. This halachic singularity reflects the uniqueness of death as an existential threat and crisis that the human being cannot conquer on his or her own! Yechezkel therefore transitions from the impurity of nidda to the process of purification of a tamei met; he compares the defilement of the Jewish people caused by their sins to a state of impurity that leaves the people powerless, unable to extricate themselves from exile without the active assistance of Hashem!