



Ki Tisa

From "Likutei Shmuel"

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No Need to Go Anywhere

Parshas [Ki Sisa](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

At the end of the parsha, the *pasuk* (verse) says, "Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the

Lord, Hashem, the G-d of Israel" (Shemos 34:23). This is the *mitzva* of "*aliyah l'regel*" – going up (to Jerusalem) for the festival.

Three times a year, on Pesach, Shavuos, and Succos, the Jews were commanded to go up to the *Beis HaMikdash* to see and be seen by the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence of G-d).

The *pasuk* continues "... and no man shall covet your land when you go up to appear before *Hashem* your

G-d, three times a year." *Hashem guaranteed* that we have nothing to fear while everyone is in *Yerushalayim*. We might have been nervous about leaving no males at home because it would be an open invitation to thieves and enemies. The *pasuk* says to have no

fear — no one will covet our land while we go up to *Yerushalayim* to see the *Shechinah*.

The *Gemara* derives a halacha from this. Whoever does not own land is not obligated to go up to *Yerushalayim* on the *Shalosh Regalim* (Pesachim 8b). The whole halacha of going up three times a year is only for someone who owns land.

The Kotzker Rebbe (1787-1859) asked, “Why is it that someone who does not own land is excused from going up to *Yerushalayim*?” The Kotzker Rebbe answered, “Because he doesn’t need to.”

Only a person who owns land, who has a connection to this world, who is into materialism, needs to go up to *Yerushalayim* to see the *Shechinah*. The person who is unencumbered by materialism does not need to go anywhere to see the *Shechinah*, because he sees the *Shechinah* everywhere.

Someone who has property, a mortgage, two garages and a Jacuzzi, etc., etc., needs to go to *Yerushalayim* to see the *Shechinah*. However, someone who is free of the materialism of this world sees the *Shechinah* **everywhere**, so he is excused from the *mitzvah* of ‘*Reiyah*,’ – going to be seen.

Why Did Moshe Need A Visual Image of The Half-Shekel Coin?

Parshas [Ki Sisa](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

This week’s parsha contains the mitzvah to donate the half-shekel coin: “This shall be given by everyone who passes through the counting, from twenty years old and up, a half shekel from the holy shekel coin, the shekel weighing twenty geirah, a half shekel as gift to Hashem.” [Shemos 30:13-14] Rashi cites a Medrash that G-d showed Moshe the appearance of a coin made

from fire weighing a half shekel and told him “This is what they shall give.”

Rashi actually abbreviates the Medrash. The Medrash itself mentions that Moshe had difficulty envisioning what exactly the half-shekel coin looked like and G-d therefore showed him a heavenly vision of exactly the way it appears. The commentators are bothered – why was it so difficult for Moshe to envision the appearance of this half-shekel coin?

The Gemara has a similar narration concerning the Menorah. The Menorah has very intricate detail and geometric configuration. We can understand how Moshe might not have been able to picture what the Menorah looked like until he was shown an example of a fiery Menorah in a vision. Likewise, the Talmud says that Hashem had to show Moshe examples of the reptiles and insects (sheratzim) mentioned in Parshas Shmini. That statement can also be understood. But what is so hard to envision about a coin? Why did G-d have to show Moshe a coin made out of fire? I will share one answer to this question based on Derush [homiletic interpretation] and another answer based on Pshat [simple interpretation].

This homiletic interpretation is offered by many. I saw it most recently in the Oznaim LaTorah. Moshe Rabbeinu had difficulty understanding how money could serve as an atonement (kaparah). Money is the root of most evil.

However, Hashem speaks of the half-shekel donation being ‘kesef hakiyurim’ [the money of atonement]. Moshe wanted to know how that can happen. How could something that is the cause of so much evil and trouble serve to bring man closer to His Maker? Therefore, G-d showed him a coin made out of fire. Is fire good or bad? Fire can be the most destructive thing in the world. It can kill. It can decimate. On the other hand, where would we be without

fire? We would freeze in the winter. We would not be able to prepare our food. The world would not be able to exist without fire.

We see that there are things in this world that can bring tremendous good and at the same time can bring tremendous evil. They can bring tremendous improvement and tremendous destruction. The point of showing Moshe the coin made out of fire was to equate money with fire. Money, too, can be destructive or constructive, depending upon how it is used.

An interpretation that is more straightforward and closer to the 'pshat' is offered by Rav Simcha Zissel, the Rosh Yeshiva from Chevron, zt"l: Moshe Rabbeinu understood that there are things in this world that are called "Cheftzah shel mitzvah" [items with which Mit zvos are performed]. Some things are natural products (e.g. — lulav, esrog, haddasim, aravos). Other things are "manufactured" (e.g. — cow-hide upon which is written certain words may be made into a Sefer Torah, Tefillin, or Mezuzah). Although the latter are man-made products, the intent of the scribe in creating them may make them holy and allow them to become a "Cheftzah shel mitzvah". Moshe did not have trouble understanding this.

However, Moshe could not understand how it is possible to do a mitzvah with a coin that is minted for commercial purposes. How is this piece of metal, which is minted by secular authorities able to become a "Cheftzah shel mitzvah"? Therefore, Hashem showed him the coin of fire and thereby informed him that in fact even such an item could be sanctified and used for achieving atonement, as long as it is GIVEN for the sake of a mitzvah.

Where Is Mordechai Alluded To In Chumash?

The Gemarah in Chullin [139b] expounds on the pasuk discussing the recipe for making the ketores [incense] used on the Mizbayach HaPineemee [inner Altar]: Where is there an illusion to the personage of Mordechai in the Torah (Chumash)? It is found in this pasuk — “Take for yourself spices, Mor Deror...” [Shemos 30:23]. The Aramaic targum [translation] of the words Mor Deror is “Mor dechya” (which when put together becomes Mordechai). What do Chazal mean by this exegesis?

The Chasam Sofer suggests an interesting explanation: The Rambam explains in Hilchos Klei HaMikdash that the spice which the Torah calls Mor Deror is musk. This is the opinion of Rabbeinu Yona as well. In Tractate Brachos, Rabbeinu Yonah explains how we obtain the musk ingredient. There is a certain animal that grows a boil on its neck, which is filled with blood. When the boil dries out, the blood turns into a powder like substance, which is musk. This is used in the ketores and is critical for providing it with its pleasant aroma. Some Rishonim question the Rambam and Rabbeinu Yona: How can we take a substance that originated in an impure source (blood of a non Kosher animal) and use it in the ketores in the Bais HaMikdash [Temple]? The Rabbeinu Yona answers that the powder like musk is a “new substance” (panim chadashos ba-u l'kan) and is disassociated from the original blood of the non-kosher animal.

Mordechai's lineage is traced in the Megillah. He is identified as Mordechai the son of Yair, the son of Shimi, the son of Kish [Eshter 2:5]. Who was Shimi? This is none other than Shimi ben Geirah, arch-enemy of Dovid HaMelech [King David]. He called the King an adulterer and a murderer. Shimi was a traitor who cursed Dovid HaMelech when he was down and out. The righteous Mordechai

was the grandson of Shimi. How can such a Tzadik come from such a wicked person?

The answer is that a person can disregard his lineage and make himself into a great person. Where do we find such a precedent as Mordechai in the Torah? Namely, where do we find that in spite of one's ancestry, he can prove himself and be the leader of a generation? We find that phenomenon in the musk (Mor Deror = More Dechya) used in the ketores. Its origin stemmed from the blood of a non-kosher animal and yet it was a key ingredient in the ketores burned on the Mizbayach HaPineemee.

Did Moshe Not Believe What G-d Told Him?

Parshas Ki Sisa contains one of the most tragic events in all of Chumash – the sin of the Golden Calf. Chazal say that the reason why the Jews sinned here was only to demonstrate the path of repentance to the masses (of future generations). In this narrative, we learn the theme of how to do Teshuva.

The Nesivos Shalom (the Slonimer Rebbe) asks an interesting question. G-d told Moshe "Go, descend – for your nation that you have brought up from Egypt has degenerated. They have strayed quickly from the way that I have commanded 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.'" [Shemos 32:7-8] Moshe descends, sees the people dancing around the Calf and then breaks the Luchos with the Ten Commandments.

The Slonimer Rebbe asks – why did Moshe wait until he saw for himself that the Jewish people were worshipping an idol? G-d already told him what they were doing. What more testimony did Moshe need? Did he not believe G-d that he

had to witness their crime with his own eyes before taking the action of breaking the Luchos?

The Slonimer Rebbe answers that Moshe Rabbeinu's action teaches us something that is really the key to Teshuva. Most of the time, when a person sins, there is something called guilt. Guilt is the first step to repentance. As long as one feels bad about what he has done, there is the strong hope that he will amend his ways in the future. "One who does a sin and is embarrassed by it, G-d will forgive him". [Brachos 12b]

Moshe believed G-d that the Jews made an idol and thereby sinned grievously, but he was hoping that at least they had remorse for their actions. That would have allowed them to take the next steps towards repentance. It was only when Moshe descended from the mountain top and saw them dancing ecstatically around the Golden Calf that he realized that they had no pangs of guilt or any second thoughts about what they had done. Then he knew that drastic measures were called for and it was only at that point that he decided to break the Luchos containing the Ten Commandments.

Unity – Parshas Ki Sisa

Written by Rabbi Moishe Kormornick

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל הָעֶבֶר עַל הַפְּקָדִים מַחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בַּשֶּׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ

This they should give, everyone who passes among the counted, Machatzis Hashekel (the Half Shekel) of the Holy Shekel (30:13)

Instead of counting people to determine the census, each person gave a *Machtzitz HaShekel* — Half Shekel — which was counted and then used towards the expenses of the Mishkan.^[1] Why did the coin specifically need to be a half coin? If the purpose was merely to serve as a means of counting the Jewish People, *any* coin should have been sufficient!

Perhaps the message is that when a group comes together, especially when it is contributing towards the spiritual upkeep and development of their community, each member must approach their role with humility, knowing that however great they may personally be, their strengths and talents are not completed without the strengths and talents of others. Even a wealthy person, notes the Malbim, should be humbled by the fact that he cannot fulfil the mitzvah of tzedakah without there being a poor person there to receive his charity.^[2] As such, everyone has an equal role to play, because being the provider or the recipient is still only a 50% role.

If we take this message to heart, it will no doubt help us appreciate those around us in a greater way and increase our sense of unity. Which, as the Malbim writes, will serve as a tremendous merit for our protection and success.^[3]

[1] Shemos 30:16.

[2] Shemos 30:12

[3] Ibid.

Don't Remain Silent! – Ki Sisa

Written by Rabbi Eliezer Chryslar

“Moshe stood at the gate of the camp and announced: ‘Whoever is on G-d’s side, come to me!’ And the whole tribe of Levi gathered to him.” (32:26)
 The Da’as Zekeinim mi’Ba’alei Tosfo writes that there were three groups by the “Eigel”: one which only requested a leader (“... who will go before us”); one which accepted the “Eigel” as a god (they were the 3,000 men who were judged by the sword); and the tribe of Levi who all remained loyal to Hashem. The Chofetz Chayim, quoting the Medrash Yalkut, adds: “Who would not profess to be on G-d’s side?” But what Moshe Rabeinu really meant was ‘Who did not even donate one golden ring for the “Eigel” ‘. In other words, “Who sides with G-d exclusively? Who did not play any role whatsoever in promoting the ‘Eigel ha’zohov’?”

*The Ramban, commenting on the three groups referred to by Chazal, explains that those who sacrificed to it were killed by the sword, those who embraced and kissed it died by pestilence, and those who only rejoiced over its creation died after drinking the water which contained the gold dust of the “Eigel”. We see from here, he adds, just how abhorrent idolatry is in the eyes of G-d, until even the slightest participation – even if it is just with our hearts, is considered a serious offence.

*It is interesting to note that outside of the tribe of Levi, there wasn't a single Jew who is mentioned as having been exclusively loyal to Hashem. Everyone was guilty of at least minimal participation in serving the Eigel and, if not of participation, then at least he was guilty of silence. The only people not branded as collaborators by the Torah were the Levi'im.

*It is well-known how three advisers were present when Par'oh presented his plan to use the Jews for forced labour – Yisro, Bil'om and Iyov. Yisro objected, Bil'om condoned the plan, whereas Iyov was silent – he abstained. Yisro merited to “enter the protection of the Shechinah” – he converted to Judaism; Bil'om was killed by the sword – by the very people whose slavery he advocated. Iyov was stricken with suffering.

The question is asked as to why Iyov was punished. He probably felt the futility of protesting against the mighty Par'oh. Surely Par'oh, a man with an iron will, would not relinquish such a plan on his advice? Surely the consultation with his advisers was a mere formality? He wanted – and expected – their assent, and anything else would probably anger him – who knows with what result.

But, explains the Brisker Rov, when people are being hurt, badly hurt, one has no right to remain silent. So Hashem put Iyov to the test: how silent would he remain when he was made to suffer?

One cannot remain impartial when others are suffering. Even if there is nothing that one can really do, then at least a sign of sympathy is forthcoming, for to remain silent is a sign that one does not care – and total insensitivity to another's suffering is a sin.

No less with G-d. If we love Him and care about Him, then we cannot just watch as others simply reject Him and trample His Name underfoot. One

must protest in the most vehement terms, doing what one can to rectify the situation and to put an end to the desecration of G-d's name. And if one is convinced there is nothing one can do, then at least a verbal protest is due – a sigh of pain. Otherwise one must be branded as a collaborator, for silence encourages the perpetrators to pursue their course; and besides, total insensitivity to Chillul Hashem too, is considered a grave sin.

Shabbos Enjoys the Shabbos – Ki Sisa

Written by Rabbi Eliezer Chrysler

“u’va’Yom ha’Shevi’i shovas vayinofash” (31:17).

‘G-d gives a person all extra Neshamah on Erev Shabbos, and then on Motza’ei Shabbos, He takes it away as the Torah writes “shovas vayinofash” (Beitzah 16a).

*The G’ro cites another Gemara in Shabbos (118a) ‘whoever **gives the Shabbos joy** will receive an unlimited inheritance ... ‘ One achieves this through food, drink and nice clothes. However, **this** should be enjoyed for the sake of Shabbos, and not for one’s own personal benefit (as the-above words imply). And that is why we say ‘Me’angehah Le’olam kovod yinchal’ (the one who gives **it** joy will inherit everlasting honor) ... ‘**it**’, the extra Neshamah (which is synonymous with the Shabbos).*

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With this we can better understand the dialogue between Rebbi Yehoshua and the Roman Emperor, cited in Shabbos (119a). When the latter asked the former for the recipe of the beautiful Shabbos food of which he had heard, he was informed that it is only someone who actually observes the Shabbos, who can provide Shabbos with the joy, by enjoying Shabbos for Shabbos’ sake. Someone who does not observe Shabbos, cannot possibly do this.

Humor

Why is the Shabbos before Purim called Shabbos Zachor?

BECAUSE THAT IS THE LAST THING YOU WILL REMEMBER FOR A LONG TIME!

What was Queen Esther's royal gown made of?

POLY-ESTER

Why do we give out so much *tzedaka* (charity) on Purim?

The Megillah says that this holiday is called Purim because of the PUR, the LOTS, that Haman drew. Therefore we give LOTS to the POOR!

What *bracha* (blessing) did the Jews say upon seeing Haman hanging on the gallows?

HA'EITZ!

(Haeitz literally means the tree. The blessing we say on fruits is "borei pri haeitz," blessing G-d "who creates the fruit of the tree.")

And one final oldie but goodie:

Who had the tallest family tree in history?

HAMAN!