

PARSHAT KI-TISA

PART ONE - QUESTIONS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

THE DEFINITION OF 'WORK' [ON 'SHABBOS']

1. Recall (from our study of Parshiot Terumah/Tezaveh) how chapters 25 thru 31 constituted a distinct unit, containing a set of mitzvot that 'interrupted' the narrative describing what happened when Moshe ascended Har Sinai for the first forty days.

Recall as well how ALL of the mitzvot in this section related to the building of the Mishkan, EXCEPT for the final section, i.e. 31:12-30. Instead, that section dealt with the prohibition of doing work on Shabbat. [If you don't remember this, it is highly recommended that you first scan from chapter 24 until chapter 32 to review this structure.]

With this in mind, read 31:12-30 and attempt to determine how this short section about Shabbat relates to the lengthy section of mitzvot about the Mishkan that preceded it.

What halachik principle do Chazal learn from this juxtaposition? In your opinion, could this conclusion be considered the simple "pshat" of these psukim? [Explain 3:12-13.]

In your answer, relate to the meaning of the word "ach" in 31:13. [See also Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, and Seforno on this pasuk!]

2. Review 31:16-17 once again, noting how the relationship between shabbat and the concept of a "brit". Note as well how shabbat is considered an "ot" [a sign] of this covenant between God and His people! [See parallel between 31:13 and 29:46! Recall how 29:46 formed the conclusion of the summary of the "shchinah" unit discussed in our shiur on Parshat Tezaveh.]

What else in Chumash is considered an "ot brit".

[If you give up, try Breishit 9:12-13 and 17:7-11.]

Based on these sources, attempt to explain how and why "shabbat" acts as an "ot" brit, and how it relates to God's creation of the universe (and our relationship to that creation). [In your answer, relate to both "brit ha'keshet" and "brit milah".]

Relate this as well to the logic behind the prohibition of doing work on the sabbath, and its definition (i.e. any type of 'creativity') as opposed to just 'physical labor'.

3. Review the opening psukim of Parshat Vayakhel (Shmot 35:1-5), noting once again how the prohibition of doing work on shabbat is mentioned as Moshe introduces the laws of the Mishkan (that follow in chapters 35 thru 40).

Compare this presentation of shabbat to its parallel presentation in 31:12-17.

Can you explain the reason for both the similarities and differences?

[Relate to how chapters 25-31 describe the 'commandment' to build the Mishkan, while chapters 35-40 describe the 'instructions' concerning how to build it.

WHY FORTY DAYS?

4. Review Shmot 24:12, noting the reason why Moshe's ascends Har Sinai for the first forty days. Based on this pasuk, can you suggest any 'logical' reason why it was necessary for Moshe to spend a full forty days on Har Sinai? [What did Moshe Rabeinu receive at that time, that would take such a long time to receive?]

After you answer this question, see a beautiful Ibn Ezra on this topic in his commentary on 31:18.

[If you had any doubts concerning Ibn Ezra's "frumkeit", I recommend that you study this Ibn Ezra carefully, noting also how it relates to his entire approach to the study of Chumash.]

A SIGNIFICANT 'SELECTIVE' REPETITION

5. Towards the conclusion of Parshat Ki-tisa, after God declares His 13 Midot of Rachamim (34:6-9), we find a 'promise' (see 34:10) followed by a battery of short commandments (see 34:11-26).

Are these commandments (and 'promise') new, or are do they sound like a 'repeat' of mitzvot that were given earlier in Parshat Mishpatim? [Relate especially to Shmot 23:9-33.]

If so, can you explain why specifically these mitzvot (and promise) are being repeated?

[Hint: Be sure you can also explain which type of mitzvot from Parshat Mishpatim are not repeated in this section.]
Relate your answer to the events of "chet ha'egel".

KEY WORDS

6. When studying Chumash, we often find a certain key word that is used several times throughout a certain section. [In Hebrew, this is called a "mila maancha" - lit. a 'guiding' word.]

In Parshat Ki-tisa, we find a classic example in the Torah's use of the verb "li'rot" - to see [reish.aleph.hey] - in the Chet ha'egel narrative.

As you review chapters 32->34, note how often we find this verb (in different forms), and be sure that you understand its meaning. 'See' for yourself [pun intended!] if this word points to a central theme of the entire "chet ha'egel" narrative. As you read, pay careful attention to: 32:1, 32:5, 32:9, 32:19, 32:25, 33:10, 33:12-13!, 33:20-23, 34:10, 34:23-24!, 34:30, and 34:35.

What does it mean when God 'sees'..., when man 'sees'..., and when man 'sees' (or is seen by) God?

Relate also to the use of this verb (r.a.h.) at Ma'amad Har Sinai, especially 20:15, 20:19. See also 19:21, 24:10, & Devarim 5:21!

Could you say that sometimes 'seeing is believing'? Explain.

Keep this question in mind as prepare the study questions for this week's shiur.

7. If you had fun with that one, you can also try an easier one: the use of the word "ra'ah" [evil/ reish.ayin.hey.] in 32:12-14.

Relate to 32:17, 32:22, 32:25?, 33:4.

Relate to Shmot 10:10; see Rashi, Ramban, Chizkuni, Rashbam.

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PART TWO - Questions for preparation (for the weekly shiur)

THE STORY OF CHET HA'EGEL - ITS 'BACKDROP'

1. To appreciate the events that unfold at chet ha'egel, we must begin our study with a review of 23:20 thru 24:18.

Recall from our study of Ma'amad Har Sinai (and its "ko tomar unit" /20:15-33:33), that in addition to the Dibrot, and the mitzvot of the "ko tomar" unit, Bnei Yisrael also received a special promise (see 23:20-25) at the conclusion of that unit concerning how God will help them inherit the Land (should they keep His mitzvot).

Carefully review these psukim, especially 23:20-25, noting how God promises to send a "MALACH asher shmi b'kirbo" to assist them. Be sure that you understand these psukim, and note the use of the word "lfanecha" in this context.

In your opinion, WHO do you think this MALACH is (or was supposed to be)? In your answer, relate to 23:22, i.e. that the MALACH is someone that Bnei Yisrael must 'listen to', and will relay to Bnei Yisrael whatever mitzvot God may command.

Relate this as well to the meaning of "shmi b'kirbo" in 23:21. [Note as well Shmot 19:9 in regard to how Moshe will act as God's 'speaker'.]

2. Carefully review 24:12-18, in an attempt to determine (according to pshat) if Bnei Yisrael had any idea concerning how long Moshe was going to be gone for?

[What popular Midrash is based on 24:14?]

What was the last thing that Moshe told them?

After several weeks passed, what conclusion do you think that just about everyone had made? In your opinion, (and based on 24:12-17), was this a logical conclusion?

3. Based on Shmot 3:6-9 (and 3:13-17), when Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, how long did they expect that it would take until they would arrive in Eretz Canaan?

Assuming they had concluded that Moshe was not going to return, what 'should' have they had asked for? Would it make sense for them to remain in the desert or travel somewhere else? If so, to where should they travel?

UNDERSTANDING CHAPTER 32, BASED ON CHAPTER 24

4. Review 24:12-18 once again and then jump directly to 31:18, and continue reading 32:1-3. Note how chapter 32 forms a direct continuation of the narrative that began in chapter 24.

With this in mind, review 32:1 once again in an attempt to determine more precisely what Bnei Yisrael are asking for.

In your answer, use 24:12-17 to explain why Bnei Yisrael complain specifically to Aharon, and why they ask for "elohim asher YALCHU I'FANEINU...!"

5. Note the parallels between chapter 24 and 32:1-7! How does these parallels help us understand the events that take place at chet ha'egel?

For example:

Compare the ceremony that take place in Shmot 24:3-11 with the actions that Aharon takes at chet ha'egel (in 32:1-6). What is parallel, what is different?

Compare the people's request in 32:1 ["asher YALCHU I'FANEINU"] to 23:20-23 (noting word "I'fanecha"). Based on this parallel, what are the people asking for? Considering their predicament, is their request logical?

AHARON'S INTENTIONS

6. Based on the above questions, does it seem that Aharon's intention in making the "egel" was to make a symbol of God, or did he intend to make an idol to worship a different god. [Be sure that you can explain each phrase in 32:4 and 32:5.]

In relation to this question, see Rav Yehuda Ha'Levi in Sefer Ha'Kuzari I.77! See also Ramban on 32:1.]

WHAT WENT WRONG?

7. In the parallels between 24:3-7 with 32:5-6, did you find a parallel for "va'yakumu l'tzachek"? Can you explain why?

What does this phrase imply? [See the various opinions in the commentators.]

To help understand what happened (and hence what this phrase implies), read 32:17-19. What is the cause for this 'loud noise' that Yehoshua hears, and what are the "mcholot" that so angers Moshe Rabeinu when he sees the "egel"?

[Relate as well to 32:25.]

8. As you review 32:6-8, note on what day God becomes angry and tells Moshe to go down from Har Sinai. Was it on the same day that Aharon made the "egel" or on the NEXT day? Explain why this point can help explain what Bnei Yisrael's sin was.

GOD'S ANGER AND CONCLUSION

9. Review 32:7-9, noting God's immediate response to chet ha'egel. Relate this to 23:21, i.e. "ki lo yisa l'fisheichem". Note as well how 32:9 includes an additional statement. In that pasuk, what does "ra'itti" [God 'saw'] imply? [Compare 32:1.]

Similarly, what does "am kshe oref" imply, both literally and in its context? Explain God's conclusion and its implications.

In your opinion, does God's conclusion that Bnei Yisrael are an "am kshe oref" stem only from the events of chet ha'egel, or may it have been based on earlier events as well? [Relate to Yechezkel 20:5-10 and the TSC shiur on Parshat Beshalach.]

BRIT AVOT AND BRIT SINAI

10. In his tefilla [prayer] in 32:11-13, what approach does Moshe use to thwart the impending punishment? Why does he provide TWO reasons, and what are they?

Note how 32:13 relates to "brit Avot". How does that "brit" relate to "brit Sinai"? Relate to the "brit" in 19:5-6 as well as 24:7.

In your opinion, can "brit Sinai" be broken? If so, when and why? Can "brit Avot" be broken? If so, when and why?

Use your answer to explain WHY Moshe may have broken the LUCHOT - the symbol of "brit Sinai" (see 32:15-20), based on 23:21 and its implications.

WHO'S TO BLAME?

11. From the story in 32:1-25, it appears that the entire nation had sinned; yet from 32:26-34, it appears that only about 3,000 people sinned (at least they were the only ones punished). Can you explain why? Relate to Moshe's request in 32:30-32 and the events that took place in 32:1-6.

What is God's answer (to Moshe's request for pardon) in 32:33-34? If God pardons them, why does His answer appear to be negative, if He didn't pardon them, why does He instruct Moshe to now lead them to the Promised Land?

A NEW MALACH

12. Read 33:1-3. Note how this relates to "brit Avot". Explain the nature of this MALACH who will now lead them? Is the same MALACH that was mentioned in 23:20-21? If not, how is this MALACH different?

Read 33:4-6. What is the significance of God telling Bnei Yisrael to remove their 'jewelry' which they received at Har Chorev (33:1-7)? [How do Chazal explain this 'jewelry'?

Explain Bnei Yisrael's response to this request, and the final outcome of this 'parsha' (see 33:7-11).

To where must Moshe move his tent afterward, WHY? What has happened to the SHCHINA? Does it ever return? If so, when and why?

MOSHE RABEINU'S INTERVENTION

13. At this point in the story (i.e. after 33:11), what would have happened had Moshe Rabeinu not intervened?

Would Bnei Yisrael have entered Eretz Canaan? If so, at what 'spiritual level'? With which mitzvot? Relate to 32:34; 33:1-4; 33:12-17, and to "brit Sinai" (or the lack of it) in general.

14. What is the gist of Moshe's petition to God 33:12-16?

Note Moshe's emphatic statement of "re'ay ki amcha ha'goy ha'zeh" in 33:13. Does Hashem agree?

How does this relate to God's response in 33:17-23? How does this response relate to the story of the second luchot as explained in 34:1-10? [Note how 34:5-6 relates to 33:19!]

How does all of this relate to the second luchot and God's 13 midot of rachamim?

Have the 'ground rules' of God's relationship with Bnei Yisrael changed? Relate this to the need for the SECOND LUCHOT and a new covenant (see 34:27).

GOD'S 13 MIDOT OF RACHAMIM

15. To the best of your recollection, up until the events of "chet ha'egel", had God shown any special type of attributes?

If so, where these "midot" [attributes] of mercy or "din" [exacting punishment]? Support your answer, by bringing examples from earlier events that are recorded in Chumash.

16. We are informed of God's '13 midot' of mercy in Parshat Kitzitza, in the story when Moshe receives the second "luchot".

In your opinion, did God only 'acquire' these midot at this time, or had these been His 'midot' since the time of Creation.

GOD'S MIDOT BEFORE CHET HA'EGEL

17. Carefully review the "Aseret ha'Dibrot" [the Ten Commandments /Shmot 20:1-14], noting how the first three DIBROT include certain attributes by which God will either reward or punish Am Yisrael. Find those MIDOT, write them down, and make note of where you found them (for later reference).

In your opinion, are these attributes of mercy?
If not, explain how else they could be categorized.

think that Chizkuni presents this explanation specifically on this pasuk? [Why does he mention the date of 20 Iyar? / When you give up, see Bamidbar 10:11.]

b'hatzlacha,
menachem

18. Next, review 23:20-24, noting 23:21. Does this passage relate to any of God's midot? If so, how does it relate to the midot that you found in the Dibrot?

Similarly, can you find any of God's midot when He becomes angered by chet ha'egel (see Shmot 32:6-10).
If so, name these midot as well, and add them to your list.

THE MIDOT OF THE 2nd LUCHOT (in relation to 1st)

19. Based on your answers to the above questions, make a list of God's midot mentioned in Chumash BEFORE the Moshe receives the second luchot. [In other words, answer question #2 (above) again! Now, compare your list with the 13 MIDOT of mercy in 34:6-7. Do they correspond? If so, how and why?

20. Based on your answers to the above study questions, re-examine the 13 MIDOT as described in 34:6-8. Carefully compare them to the various "midot" which you found in your study of Ma'amad Har Sinai (above).

How to God's MIDOT prior to the events of "chet ha'egel" compare to His MIDOT beforehand (i.e. at the time of Matan Torah)? Can you find a parallel?

RETURNING TO THE FIRST MALACH

21. Review once again the events of "chet ha'egel", paying careful attention to the phrase "am kshe oref" in 32:9, 33:5, and 34:9. Attempt to relate these psukim to God's attributes that have been discussed thus far.

How do you explain the word "ki" in "ki am kshe oref hu..." in 34:9, in contrast to what it means in 33:5.

1) 'because';

or 2) 'even though'?

Explain the thematic significance of this translation.

22. After God declares His 13 MIDOT of mercy in 34:6-8, are there times when He may still enact His attributes of "din" [exacting judgement]? Support your answer based on 34:11-14!
If so, can you explain why?

PART THREE - PARSHANUT

1. Review Moshe's tefilla in 32:11-14. Considering 32:14, what is problematic with the story that takes place in 32:15-33? Would it make more sense to place these psukim after 32:32?

See Ibn Ezra ha'aroch on 32:11 for a complete discussion. Then see Ramban, and his approach. Note how both commentators based their explanation on the parallel account of these events in Devarim chapter 9.

2. Read Shmot 34:27. In your opinion, what specifically does "ha'davarim ha'eyle" refer to? [Can you think of more than one possibility? Be sure to relate to the previous "parshia"!]

Now see Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, and Seforno. Can you explain why there are so many different opinions?

2. Now read 34:28, noting "va'yichtov al ha'luchot". When you read this pasuk, how did you translate "va'yichtov", i.e. did God inscribe the Commandments on these LUCHOT or did Moshe? [Or didn't you think?!]

Now see all the commentators! How do they all answer the above question? [Are you surprised?] On which pasuk do they all base their pirush on? Why?

3. Now read 34:32. In your opinion (and based on the context of this pasuk) what mitzvot does "et kol asher diber Hashem ito b'har Sinai" refer to? [Be sure to give this pasuk some careful thought.] How does this pasuk relate to 35:1 and its context?

As usual, see Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, and Seforno. Can you explain why there are so many different opinions?

Finally, see Chizkuni's pirush on this pasuk! How does his explanation help you appreciate Chazal's exegetic principle of "ein mukdam u'muchar ba'Torah". In your opinion, why do you