

הַשַּׁבָּת  
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# פרשת כי תשא Parshat Ki Tisa

## Ashreinu | אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



**MRS. AMY HOROWITZ**  
THE SYMBOL OF SHABBAT

MRS. AMY HOROWITZ

AVI GIRNUN ('22)

PENINA KAHANE ('22)

ASHIRA MEYEROWITZ ('21)

BATSHEVA SHEKHTER ('20)

When it comes to making kiddush on Shabbat, the variety of minhagim is mind-boggling. Sit or stand? Pass the cup or pre-pour? Make your own kiddush or be *yotzei* with someone else's? Put ten people in a room

and ask them about their family's kiddush customs and you'll get (at least) ten different answers.

The essence of the mitzvah of kiddush is the recitation of the actual bracha, "בורא פרי הגפן". On Friday nights, we preface that bracha with the pesukim that describe God resting on the original seventh day, after He finished creating the universe. This set of pesukim has become inextricably attached to the Friday night kiddush, universally recited before the "בורא פרי הגפן".

The kiddush we recite Shabbat day also has pesukim at-

tached to it, a lot of pesukim, anywhere from one to three paragraphs, depending on...you guessed it...your minhag! This one's tricky. Some people (mostly Sephardim) begin their kiddush with "*im tashiv*"; others begin with "*veshamru*"; still others start with "*zachor et Yom haShabbat*". But here is where it gets really complicated. Some people begin with half a pasuk from the end of the third paragraph ("*al kein berach*"), and others don't recite any introductory pesukim at all!

Why does everyone seem to agree on what to do on Friday nights, whereas Shabbat day is an apparent free-for-all?

The kiddush we recite on Friday nights is *mi'dorayta*, biblically obligated. The kiddush we say on Shabbat day is *mi'drabanan*, rabbinically instituted. Therefore, it would make sense to give our Friday night kiddush more weight by attaching pesukim to it. On Shabbat day, it's theoretically enough to simply recite the "בורא פרי הגפן" and fulfill the rabbinic obligation, so the additional pesukim are just icing on the cake.

If so, why is there even an option to recite additional pesukim before the bracha? What's the point, when it's total-

ly unnecessary and may even detract from the halachik superiority of the kiddush on Friday night?

The simple and most commonly-offered answer to these questions is that the Shabbat day kiddush needs the extra weight, the extra substance that these additional pesukim provide. Because it is “only *mi'drabanan*”, the Shabbat day kiddush is somehow less important and therefore requires the introductory paragraphs to boost its significance.

This sensitivity aside, perhaps another answer to our question can be found by looking at the specific meaning of the Shabbat-day pesukim themselves and trying to understand what they add to the kiddush.

While the pesukim we universally recite on Friday night remind us of God's creation of the world, the pesukim we have an option to recite on Shabbat day focus on something else entirely. The paragraph of “*veshamru*” comes from this week's parsha and describes the Jews' observance of Shabbat during their years of wandering in the wilderness. The paragraph of “*zachor*” comes from the aseret hadibrot in Parshat Yitro. In both of these cases, the additional pesukim are describing the unique role Shabbat plays in the relationship the Jewish people have with God. Whereas creation of the world and the 7-day cycle we call a week is (or should be) acknowledged by all Mankind, the mitzvah to observe Shabbat is uniquely Jewish. The fact that we as a people have kept Shabbat continuously from the time of the *midbar* until this very weekend testifies to our special relationship with Hashem.

This week's parsha instructs us to keep Shabbat as an **תּוֹטָה**, a sign, a symbol of our ongoing commitment to God's mitzvot, not just a commemoration of one great act of Creation. Our observance of Shabbat, including our recitation of kiddush on Shabbat day, is an opportunity to testify to that commitment. Of course we can fulfill our obligation to recite kiddush without the optional extra pesukim, but including them is a way of appreciating God not only as Creator but as an integral part of our everyday lives, reminding us of who we are as Jews.



## NO LIMITATIONS

AVI GIRNUN ('22)

In this week's Parsha, Hashem commands each Jew to give a *machatzit hashekel*, a half-shekel. The money would be used to help maintain the Mishkan and also serve as a method for counting the nation. The Torah goes into detail about the age range of the individuals who had to give a half-shekel and the fact that they each had to give a half-shekel, regardless of their finances.

One could ask why Hashem did not simply tell Moshe to count all the Jews, rather than counting them indirectly by collecting the *machatzit hasheke*? This seems like a tedious task that could have easily been performed by Hashem immediately or by Moshe in a more direct manner.

Some answer that the reason the Jews may not be directly counted is to teach the lesson that our nation cannot have limitations imposed on it. An exact count of the nation limits our people by defining the exact number of Jews in the world. We know that Hashem promises in the Torah that we will be as numerous as the stars and the grains of sand (Bereishit 15:5; 32:13). We understand that to mean that we will be so numerous as to be uncountable, as if infinite.

As a nation, we have always achieved and accomplished more than one would think is possible of a people that is small in number when compared to the rest of the world. Just as we are able to accomplish amazing things as a nation, so too, as individuals, we are able to achieve incredible things. By prohibiting the counting of the Jewish people, Hashem is teaching us that we have incredible potential, both as a nation and as individuals.

## STAY FOCUSED

PENINA KAHANE ('22)

In this week's parsha, Ki Tisa, Moshe goes up Har Sinai to receive the *luchot*. Bnei Yisrael miscounted Moshe's 40-day journey, so on day 39 they got worried that he was in danger and would never come back down. To calm them down, Aaron told Bnei Yisrael to bring him all of their gold, and they made a golden calf.

Bnei Yisrael had just witnessed some of Hashem's supernatural miracles: the ten plagues, the splitting of the Red Sea, the falling of *mann* from the sky, the sweetening of bitter water in the desert, etc. After all this, how were Bnei Yisrael able to turn towards *avodah zara* so quickly? Shouldn't they have had trust in Hashem and realized that He wanted the best for them?

One possible answer is that the golden calf was not created as a rebellion towards Hashem, rather as a replacement for Moshe. They believed he was never coming back down and that they had just lost their leader. The Talmud says that Bnei Yisrael had so much doubt that in the end, they even saw a vision of Moshe dead. However, this answer is somewhat difficult to understand, because when Moshe finally came down from on top of the mountain he said, "You can now turn back and avoid tragedy. Stop worshipping the golden calf and affirm your loyalty to God." Only the tribe of Levi listened to him, and the rest of Bnei Yisrael continued to serve the golden calf. It is evident that the calf was not really a replacement of Moshe, but rather a replacement of Hashem.

The Rambam suggests a different answer to our question of how Bnei Yisrael could turn to quickly to *avodah zara*; he explains that idolatry is not a single step, but rather a process. Bnei Yisrael lost focus on what was really important. When they first left Mitzraim they were focused on Hashem, but eventually their belief faded and they turned to something else, the golden calf. In the world that we live in it is very difficult to stay focused on what is really important -- Judaism. We become distracted very easily. From this week's parsha, we see what can happen when we let the physical aspect of our lives take over. These distractions can easily turn us away from Judaism. At the first sign of trouble, Bnei Yisrael became overwhelmed and lost touch with their belief in Hashem. It is important that we don't let anything distract us from what is important, and that at the first sign of trouble we don't run away. Rather, we must realize that it is a test to make sure we stay focused on the important things in life.

## ACTING RESPONSIBLY

ASHIRA MEYEROWITZ ('21)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Ki Tisa, the Torah explains that Moshe delayed in descending the mountain. Rashi explains that Moshe was continuing learning To-

rah while the Satan confused the world with darkness, in order to trick the Jews into thinking that Moshe had died. Why would Hashem allow the Satan to challenge the Jews in such a difficult way?

The Torah Ohr explains that Hashem permitted the Satan to challenge the Jews, as the Jews had reached a very high spiritual level. He explains that those with a higher level also have a stronger evil inclination. Due to their higher level, the Satan was permitted to give the Jews a difficult test. Just as the Satan was used as a test for the Jews, so too is money used as a challenge. In Parshat Ki Tisa, Hashem showed Moshe a coin made of fire. Hashem explained to Moshe that the Jews were commanded to give a half-shekel. This raises the question as to why Hashem made a coin out of fire? Why couldn't Hashem just show Moshe a regular coin?

The Noam Eliezer explains that Hashem's coin was made of fire in order to teach the Jewish people that money is like fire; if fire is used in an incorrect fashion, it can cause destruction, but if used properly it can be beneficial. In addition, if money is used to enhance or do mitzvot, there may be many blessings, yet if a person uses his money incorrectly, much destruction can occur. From this we can learn to use what we are fortunate enough to have for the use of mitzvot.

## BENEFIT FROM HOLINESS

BATSHEVA SHEKHTER ('20)

In Parshat Ki Tisa, Hashem reiterates the commandment to keep Shabbat and the punishments that follow for violating it. The pasuk states:

”וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת כִּי קֹדֶשׁ  
הוּא לָכֶם מִחֻלְלֶיהָ מוֹת יוּמָת כִּי  
כָּל־הַעֲשֵׂה בָּהּ מְלָאכָה וְנִכְרְתָהּ  
הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מִקֶּרֶב עַמִּיהָ”

You shall keep Shabbat, for it is holy for you. He who profaned it shall be put to death: whoever does work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his nation (31:14).

One question that arises from this pasuk is on the phrase, "it is holy for you." Although a day of rest seems enjoyable and relaxing, how can this day, also full of strict rules and guidelines, be considered holy for us?

One approach looks at the benefit that Shabbat provides and the implications of removing that benefit. With regards to *pikuach nefesh*, saving one's life, the Gemara Yoma 85b claims that because Shabbat is for us, it is meant to benefit us and should not cause one to die. One is allowed to desecrate Shabbat in a time of emergency because Shabbat belongs to us, and if following certain commandments during a specific situation becomes detrimental or life-threatening, Shabbat is no longer beneficial. The Gemara Ketubot 34a agrees and states that because Shabbat is meant to be holy for us, we are meant to derive benefit from the holy day.

Sforno explains that Shabbat is not just a holy day for us or simply a positive commandment to fulfill; rather, it is a serious negative commandment that requires much detail and deliberation and will result in death if violated. Shabbat is not meant to be just another day in the week or even a separate day reserved for doing absolutely nothing. Events and rituals only become holy when there is meaning and importance to every one of our actions. The attention we place on every moment leading up to and during Shabbat fills this holy day with importance and meaning.

Hashem gave us a gift when commanding us to rest on the seventh day after six days of work. He gave us the opportunity to spend one day benefiting ourselves by focusing on following Hashem's commandments and infusing our day with as much spirituality as possible. Although a four-hour nap on Shabbat afternoon or a four-course meal on Friday night may seem beneficial and enjoyable, true benefit involves incorporating Hashem into our lives and putting great detail into our *avodat Hashem*. May we all be privileged to benefit every day from our relationship with Hashem and continue to strengthen it.



# Staff

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BATSHEVA SHEKHTER

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## **FACULTY ADVISOR**

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

## **DEVELOPERS**

MAX FROHLICH ('21)  
DOVID ZAK ('19)

A KYHS PARSHA PUBLICATION



[RAVH@YESHIVAHS.ORG](mailto:RAVH@YESHIVAHS.ORG)