

COUNTING THE PEOPLE

The Torah portion opens with a description of a census of the people and that each should pay $\frac{1}{2}$ a shekel in donation to the sanctuary.

Every man over twenty years old is included in the census.

MORE BUILDING AND WHO IS DOING THE BUILDING

The Torah goes on to describe more of the furniture in the sanctuary. Including a copper bowl for the priests to wash before entering into the Tent of Meeting, the tent at the center of the sanctuary.

Moses is given detailed instruction for mixing olive oil with spices to use in rituals. Including in the consecration of the priests.

God chooses Betzalel son of Uri, son of Hur from the tribe of Judah, to be the chief artisan on the project of building the sanctuary. Betzalel is said to have a special spirit. His assistant will be Oholiav, son of Achisamakh of the tribe of Dan.

SHABBAT IS MENTIONED AGAIN

God calls on Moses to tell the people to follow the rules of Shabbat. Here God says that if you fail to honor the Shabbat you will be cut off from the people and if you work on the Shabbat you will be put to death.

God speaks of the Shabbat as an eternal sign between God and the People of Israel. Linking resting on the seventh day is linked to God resting on the seventh day of creation.

THE GOLDEN CALF

The Torah shifts gears here and we look in on a story at a time when Moses is on the mountain with God getting the tablets of the 10 commandments.

On the desert floor the people grow scared the Moses is not coming back and ask Aaron to build them a god to take care of them.

Aaron asks them to give him gold, when they do Aaron melts it and a golden calf is formed. The people worship and sacrifice to the calf saying it was the god who saved them from Egypt.

God sees the actions of the people and grew angry. He says to Moses, "Hurry go down and see what your people who you brought out of Egypt are doing".

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Darshan Yeshiva

God wants to destroy the people but Moses arguments change God's mind.

Moses carries the tablets the God had written on down the mountain only to encounter what God had seen the people doing. Moses grows angry and smashes the tablets.

Moses destroyed the golden calf with fire and ground it into a powder he mixed with water and forced the people to drink it.

Moses showed anger at Aaron, but Aaron argues the people were angry and he asked for gold to dissuade them but it didn't, then he said he put the gold in the fire and calf came out.

Moses calls on the Levites to attack those the led the people in worship of the golden calf and 3000 were killed for the sin.

God also sent a plague to punish the people.

Moses and God

Moses shows frustration with God over the people and God promises to stay with him on the journey.

Moses wants to see God's presence but God says he would die if he looked on God's face. God allows Moses to see only God's back from a safe place in the rock.

Moses is then instructed to reform two tablets and write down the commandments again.

DO NOT TRUST OTHERS

God reiterates the rules the people should follow to set them apart from the others living in the land. God does not want the people to trust in those groups and their gods.

God repeats many of the laws mentioned earlier including the Chagim (Pilgrimage Festivals) of Sukkot, Passover and Shavuot.

Some of the language here is almost identical to earlier mentions of laws for the people to follow.

MOSES CHANGES

When Moses comes down the mountain with the new tablets his face glows due to the encounter with God. This glow requires Moses to wear a veil in public for the rest of his life.

SIDE NOTE: A mistranslation of the word for rays of light into horns led to the long held belief that Jews have horns and led Michelangelo to sculpt Moses with ram's horns.

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