

PARASHAT KI TISA

Exodus 30:11–34:35

God instructs Moses to collect a half-shekel from every person over the age of twenty when he takes a census of the community. He is told to make a copper container, fill it with water, and place it in the sanctuary that the priests might wash themselves before approaching the altar; he is also to create a special anointing oil for consecrating the furniture of the *mikdash*. Moses is told that the sanctuary furnishings, including the priestly garments, are to be made under the supervision of Bezalel, a skilled artisan. Moses is commanded to remind the people that in observing the Sabbath they celebrate the covenant between themselves and God.*The Torah text now shifts back to the time of Moses standing on Mount Sinai. He is given the two tablets containing God's commandments. Forty days have passed, and below the people of Israel approach Aaron, requesting that he create a golden calf for them to worship. Aaron agrees. God tells Moses what has happened, threatening to destroy the Israelites, but Moses pleads for the people and saves them from God's anger. When Moses sees the idol they have built, however, he shatters the tablets God has given him. Entering the camp, Moses also destroys the golden idol and punishes those who have not shown loyalty to God. Fearful that God will abandon the people, Moses asks for proof that God will continue to lead them. God's Presence is shown to Moses as assurance that neither he nor the Israelites will be abandoned. Afterwards, God directs Moses to carve two new tablets and return to Mount Sinai. God commands the Israelites to observe Pesach, Shavuot, and the Sabbath. When, after the second forty days and nights, Moses returns to the people, his face is bright red, radiant from speaking with God; so he covers it with a veil.
