

JewishTimes

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Apis was the most important and venerated bull deity in ancient Egypt

| OUR SIN TOO? |

"Throughout the ages, when I am visiting the Jews for their sins, I shall visit them at the same time for a little of this Golden Calf sin in addition to their other sins for which I am then punishing them. Indeed, no punishment ever comes upon Israel in which there is not part payment for the sin of the Golden Calf" (Rashi, Exod. 32:34)

Based on Deut 24:16, "Each man is put to death only for his own crime," Rashi above must mean that the flaw that caused the Gold Calf exists in all generations. It's human nature. God punishing all generations "for the Gold Calf sin" means our sins today partake of that same flaw. What is it? Egyptians expressed it with their God Apis (above image). We express it today when seeking tangible security: wearing red bendels, checking mezuzas and other physical objects upon which we project security.

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

MIN HAHAR

RABBI CHAIM OZER CHAIT

The Holiest Site



The most holy site for the Jewish people is the Har Habayit, an area of five hundred square amot situated on the Temple Mount. With the destruction of the Second Temple the Jewish people were exiled from their most holy site and the long and painful years of the diaspora began. For the past two thousand years the Temple Mount has undergone many changes. It came under the rulership of many foreign nations: The Roman Period, Byzantine Period, Arab period, Crusader Period, Ottoman, British, Jordainan, to name

some. With the changing of time its appearance underwent changes as well. From the concluding Gemara in Makot it appears to be a desolate area as Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues walked on the Temple mount. During the Byzantine period a Church was constructed on the Temple Mount and in 691 the Muslims erected the Dome of the Rock. Al-Aqsa was built in 705 on the site of the Byzantine church. From that point on it became a Muslim holy site. The Jewish ability to ascend The Har Habayit depended on the

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ruler. When relationships between the Jewish people and their ruler were good, their ability to ascend was more permissive. But throughout this long period of Galut, the Jewish people always felt like foreigners in their own land.

On the 28th day of the month of Iyar, June 7, 1967 things miraculously changed. The Temple Mount was returned to Jewish sovereignty. Fifty four years have passed since that miraculous gift from G-d to the Jewish people. One would imagine that the nature and the overall character of the mountain would change in both its outer appearance and religious practices as well. It would be obvious to all that this is a Jewish holy site (similar to a shul), but surprisingly that has not occurred. Except for the raising of the Jewish flag over the Dome of the Rock on June 7, for approximately one hour (Prime Minister Levi Eshkol as well as Moshe Dayan ordered it to be removed on the basis that we don't display victory on the holy sites of other religions) nothing has changed and its Islamic appearance as a Muslim holy site is still ostentatiously visible. On the contrary, the Jewish people are still treated as foreigners, but now, in their own land. Even more shocking, we as a Jewish nation have only displayed disgrace and contempt to our most holy site. We have openly violated the 21 positive commandments according to the counting of the Rambam (and the 254 mitzvas according to the Sefer Ha'Chinuch) where we are commanded to show awe and reverence to this holy site, the Har Habayit.

For the first time in the history of the Jewish people we are enforcing Islamic law and of all places on the Har Habayit. Even more shocking is the fact that for most of the history of the Dome of the Rock the dome was not made out of gold, although originally gold, however the gold did not last long and for the last one thousand years it was made out of other metals such as bronze or other metals painted gold. In 1992 King Hussein of Jordan wanted to renovate the dome. He asked the Jewish state of Israel to grant him permission to build the biggest gold dome in the world to honor and glorify Islam (even in Mecca there isn't a gold dome of that magnitude). Permission was astonishingly granted. This is the gold dome we see today that sits over the Kodesh Kadashim. This is outright shocking and blasphemous. That we should honor Islam over the the Kodesh Kadashim is categorically kefirah (heretical). Furthermore, Rambam (Hilchos Beis Habechira 4:1) says that the Ark (containing the Luchos and the Shivrei Luchos) are all buried there on the Har Habayit. To honor Islam over the Luchos is unequivocally kefirah. Rambam states "he who says...that the Torah although of divine origin is now obsolete, as the Nazarenes and Moslems assert is a denier of the Torah." "They have no portion in the world to come but are cut off and perish for their wickedness and sinfulness are condemned for ever and ever" (Hilchos Teshuva 3) How did we come to such an abominable and contemptible situation?! This and other important topics will be discussed in forthcoming articles.

I am presently serving as president of Yeshivat Har Habayit under the tutelage of Rabbi Eliyahu Weber Shlita



and Kollel Drishat Zion under the tutelage of Rabbi Elisha Wolfson Shlita. I therefore feel it is my responsibility to educate and inform the public what is happening on the Har Habayit. I asked Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim if he would give me a weekly column where I can communicate and inform his readers on one of the most important and pressing topics facing the Jewish people today. He enthusiastically agreed and offered his assistance whenever needed. The column will be called "Min Hahar." We will work hard on giving our readers important Halachos as well as current events, upcoming events and politics pertaining to the Har Habayit. I will be asking others to contribute informative articles as well.

Please visit us at www.HarHabayit.org. We are dedicated and committed to protecting the holiness of this area and rendering it into a place where Jews have the right to visit and pray. Through our efforts I wish to point out that davening has returned to the Har Habayit on a regular basis, twice a day, Sunday through Thursday, as well as daily shiurim (an event to my knowledge has not taken place since the destruction of the second Temple). All are welcome to join and participate or to walk on the assigned route, thereby fulfilling the Mitzvot of showing Reverence to the Sanctuary and laying the foundation of the Third Beis Hamikdash. These visits are coordinated with the Israeli police to ensure safety and to scrupulously avoid treading on places where it is forbidden to go. ■

NOTE: One should not ascend the Temple Mount without proper Rabbinical instruction:

- 1) You should be informed of the various routes that are available according to the different Rabbinical opinions.
- 2) You must immerse in a Kosher Mikvah that meets the standards to be kosher med'oraisa.
- 3) You must receive instructions for the proper preparations for the Mikvah (Chafifah)



ISRAEL

GOD'S ETERNAL INHERITANCE TO THE JEWS

Torah records God's eternal promise of Israel, exclusively to Abraham's descendants from Isaac and Jacob:

God promises Israel to Abraham:

"I will maintain My covenant between Me and you, and your offspring to come, as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages, to be God to you and to your offspring to come. I assign the land you sojourn in to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding. I will be their God." (Gen. 17:5-8)

God promises Israel to Isaac:

"Reside in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; I will assign all these lands to you and to your heirs, fulfilling the oath that I swore to your father Abraham." (Gen. 26:3)

God promises Israel to Jacob:

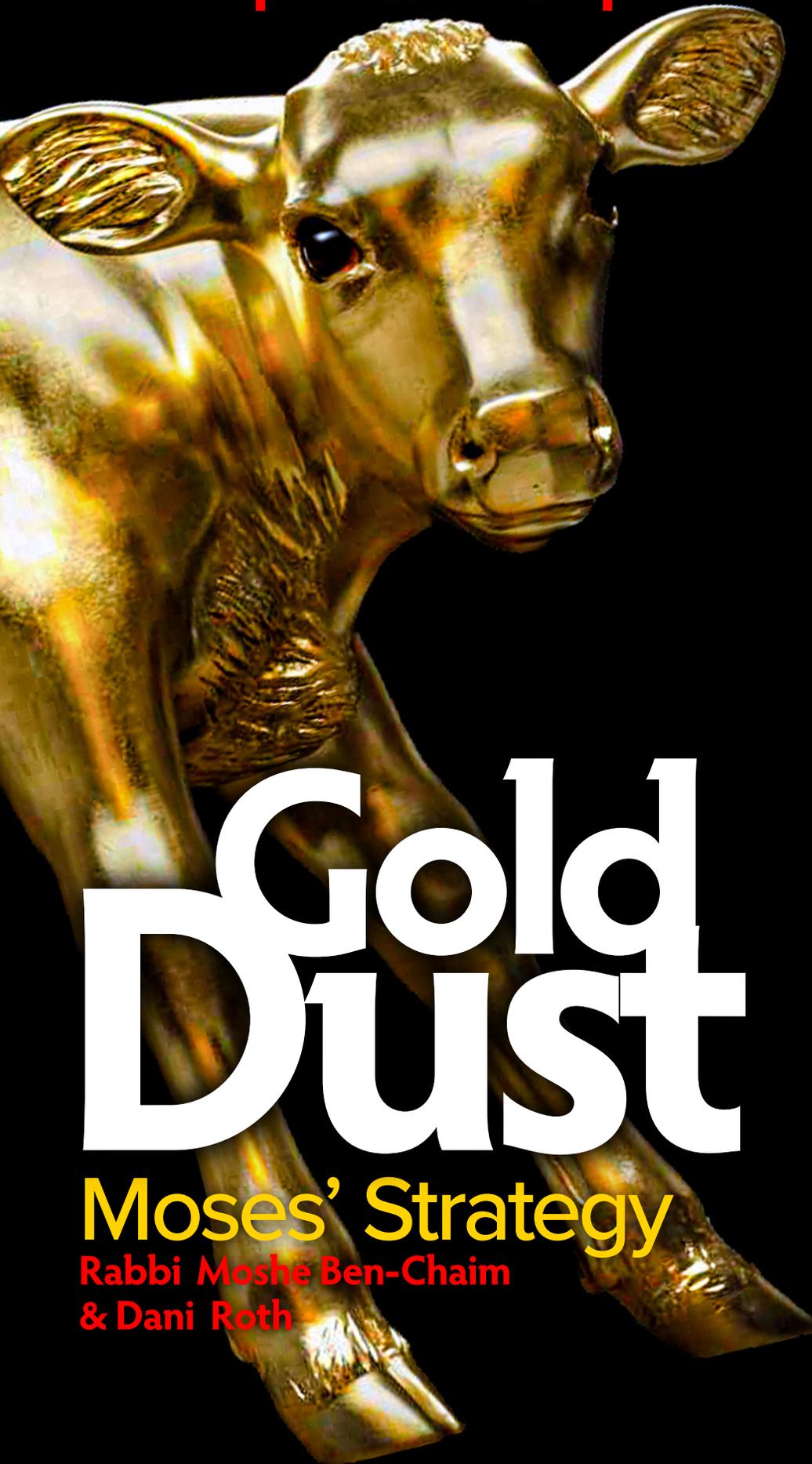
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Gold Dust

Moses' Strategy

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim
& Dani Roth

Those who worshipped the Gold Calf could no longer remain part of the Jewish nation, which follows the one God. Violators were killed in one of three manners. If the worshipper was forewarned and had witnesses, death was by the sword. If there were witnesses but no warning, a lesser crime, one died by a plague. And if one was not warned against worship, nor was he or she witnessed worshipping, the method of death was by drinking a mixture of the pulverized Gold Calf and water.[1] Those who sinned would die through this drink; those who did not sin were unharmed.

The Torah does not communicate it, but apparently, Moses knew God wished to reveal the Gold Calf worshippers through this drink. But is this not a strange method? Additionally, why did Moses melt the Gold Calf before grinding it? He could have immediately ground it, as we see his ultimate intention was to have the Jews drink the gold dust/water mixture. My friend Dani Roth asked as follows: "If Moses sought to expose the Gold Calf as a powerless idol, won't the punishment of death coming through drinking particles of the Calf actually make it appear that the Calf has powers?" A great question indeed. Dani and I arrived at the following conclusions...

Melting disfigures the Calf into an amorphous lump of metal. Moses did this first, as he wished to expose the deified Calf as nothing more than a material substance all would agree is unworthy of worship, as it possesses no powers. Forming a calf from a clearly powerless lump of gold cannot grant it powers. Moses' reducing the calf back to a mere lump of metal teaches this lesson. The Jews who worshipped the Calf, did so due to its form; they projected imagined powers onto the gold once it was formed into the god of Egypt, a calf. However, the Gold Calf was unveiled as a lie, for it could not defend itself against Moses' melting. Moses' intent was to help the Jews see past their projections, and abandon their belief before they would be punished with death. This way they died as one who repented. This explains why Moses first melted the Calf before grinding it. The Jews saw the Gold Calf as a mere lump of gold.

Moses grounded the Calf into gold dust, mixed it with water, and demanded the Jews drink the mixture.[2] This does not validate the Gold Calf as possessing any power: God was the one who killed the sinners. Rashi teaches that Moses intended to test the Jews for whom there were no witnesses of their suspected idol

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

worship. If affected by the mixture, this exposed them as idolaters. Apparently, Moses felt many Jews attempted to conceal their idol worship. Rashi teaches that Moses was testing the Jews, just as the waters test the suspected wife (the Sotah). What is this parallel? If a wife was warned by her husband not to be with another man, and she violated his warning, but does not confess her sin, the husband may have the priest give the wife a special drink. If she did not confess her sin, the drink would kill her. But let us focus on why the wife would not confess. This is because she feels she could keep hidden from her husband her illicit relationship with another man. The drink would unveil reality, and that she cannot keep this hidden from God.

In connection with the Gold Calf too, the Jews are similarly unfaithful: in this case, unfaithful to God. The Jews did not wish to confess their Gold Calf worship unseen by Moses while he was atop Mt. Sinai. Moses therefore forced the Jews to drink, teaching them that what is on their “insides” (their sinful defection from God) cannot be hidden from God. The mixture entering their bodies is a metaphor for an “inner” truth becoming revealed. It ends up there were 2 sins: 1) worshipping the Calf, and 2) denying God’s knowledge of their sin. Just as the waters enter the insides of man’s body, God “enters” the insides of man’s thoughts.

Denying their sin, the Jews wished to maintain their attachment to the Calf. Not admitting a sin is due to the sinner’s failure to view his error: he wishes to remain with his sinful belief. This means he believes the Calf to be a valid object of worship.

Moses desired to help the Jews repent by forcing them to realize that only God knows man’s thoughts; not a golden idol. The distinction between those who died from the drink from those who did not, was a clear proof that something other than the Gold Calf controls nature, and more, this Being knows man’s thoughts.

In the end, the Gold Calf could not defend itself from being melted, it was exposed as simply metal, and worshipping it met with death, not success. The Jews’ esteem for the Calf was a grave error. They ultimately had to answer to the One True Power, the only Being man is to worship, since God alone is the only being who knows man’s thoughts, and can answer our prayers. The Jews drank a mixture that distinguished a sinner from an innocent person, teaching this sublime lesson of one Deity that lives, and possesses knowledge of man; enabling Him to reward man or to punish him.

[1] Rashi, Exod. 32:20

[2] Exod. 32:20. ■

PEOPLE



In 2005 Kevin Berthia went to the Golden Gate Bridge to end his life.

He ended up talking about his life with Officer Kevin Briggs for 92 minutes while he was on the edge of the bridge. 10 years later they meet on the same bridge in much better circumstances. Good words and good people can change everything.

the CHARISMATIC Religious Leader



RABBI REUVEN MANN

This week's Parsha, Ki Tisa, contains the tragic and inexplicable account of the Eigel HaZahav (Golden Calf). The questions pertaining to this incident are numerous. How could the same Jews—who had heard a divine proclamation on Mt. Sinai, to not have any deities alongside of Hashem—so quickly regress to a primitive religious state?

The behavior of Aharon is equally incomprehensible. How could he fail to stand up to the mob, and reject their request, in no uncertain terms? Indeed, Moshe informs us in Devarim 9:20, "And with Aharon Hashem became greatly angered to destroy him; so I prayed also for Aaron at that time." And yet, after the sin of the Eigel, Hashem appointed Aaron, to minister before Him in the Mishkan (Tabernacle).

Everyone attests that, Aaron only had pure motives in his response to the people, when they said, "...rise up, make for us gods that will go before us, for his man Moshe who brought us up from the land of Egypt—we do not know what has become of him!" (Shemot 32:1).

Aaron decided, not to get into a confrontation

with the Jews. Instead, he pretended to be sympathetic to their distress and willing to work with them. In this way, he thought he could delay matters—until Moshe returned—and the entire crisis which had been engendered by his absence would be resolved.

So Aaron instructed the people, to remove the gold jewelry of: their wives, sons and daughters—and bring them to him. The commentators maintain, that this was a delay tactic, since Aaron believed that the people and their children would be reluctant to part with their ornaments.

But Aaron was wrong. The people were quick to detach their jewels and offer them to Aaron. He clearly did not appreciate how powerful their emotions in this area were, or perhaps, he would have opted for a different course of action.

When he observed the positive reaction of the people to the Golden Calf, he sought to bring things under control. He built a Mizbeiach (altar) and proclaimed; "A festival for Hashem tomorrow!" (Shemot 32:5)

But it was too late, for things had already gotten out-of-control; as the verse attests, "They arose early the next day and offered up elevation-offerings and brought peace-offerings. The people sat to eat and drink, and they got up to revel." (Shemot 32:6)

Although Aaron acted with the best of intentions, he committed a grievous error in a matter of utmost importance, and was responsible for being an accessory to the inexcusable sin of Avodah Zarah (idolatry).

In considering the tragic story of the Eigel, we must ask; what are the teachings to be learned from this debacle? What is the takeaway? There are many lessons, but I would like to focus on one which is very relevant in our times; the proper relationship we should strive to have with our spiritual leaders.

We all know how important it is (in the words of Pirkei Avot 1:6) to "...establish for yourself a Rav...". This person fulfills many tasks: as teacher, advisor and source of inspiration. Most of us, can recognize the vital role that gifted and dedicated

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mentors have played in our moral growth and development.

However, there are numerous instances where the proper role of the Rebbe becomes distorted, and he assumes a super-human aura, in the eyes of his followers. As a consequence—due to the great charisma of the Rabbi—the religious beliefs of his disciples become completely dependent on his persona. The students never make the necessary transition to independent understanding and conviction.

When this happens, the followers do not believe in the ideas that the teacher propounds, but rather, in the teacher himself. They believe he is infallible, and thus, whatever he proclaims must be true. But what happens when the great leader is no longer around?

The loss of the charismatic religious personality, can create a crisis for his followers. The Rabbis assert that Eisav started out as a genuine Tzadik (righteous person), but at the age of fifteen embarked on the path of wickedness. The event which triggered his spiritual reversal was the death of his grandfather, Avraham. As long as he was alive, Eisav sought to emulate his ways. But he never made the crucial transition to personally embracing Avraham’s philosophy. For him, it was always the “Torah of Avraham,” never his own; and when his relationship with Avraham ended, so too, did his identification with his ideas.

And this attitude, was part of the problem which led to the Eigel incident. The religiosity of the people, was bound up with the personality of Moshe Rabbeinu. As long as they had him around, they felt secure in terms of their relationship with Hashem. But once they felt that he was gone, they panicked; and made an irrational request, to fashion some type of “deity” which could take his place.

The takeaway is, that we should strive to develop a proper relationship with our teachers and leaders. We should respect them, but never accord them the status of supermen. We should not assume that whatever they say is automatically true; but rather, we should question and challenge their ideas.

Furthermore, we should develop and cultivate the ability to think for ourselves, so that we can be truly enriched, by what we learn from our esteemed teachers. This ability, will provide us with the sense of confidence in the truth of our religion and will enable us to go “from strength to strength,” in our moral and ethical development. May we merit to attain this lofty level. ■

Dear Friends, In a few weeks we will begin the public reading of the Book of Vayikra. I am happy to announce that the newest installment of my series, Eternally Yours- G-d’s Greatest Gift To Mankind- Vayikra, is now available at Amazon. I hope it enhances your study of the third Book of the Torah: [amazon.com/dp/B09SHRXS3Q](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09SHRXS3Q)

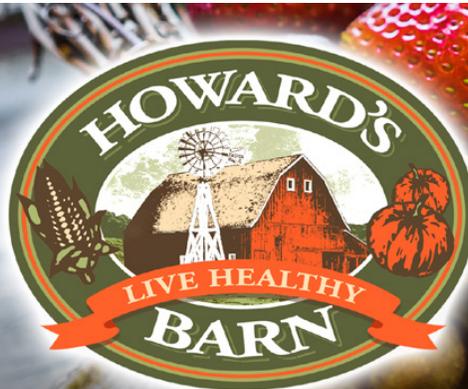
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What was the sin of the Golden Calf?

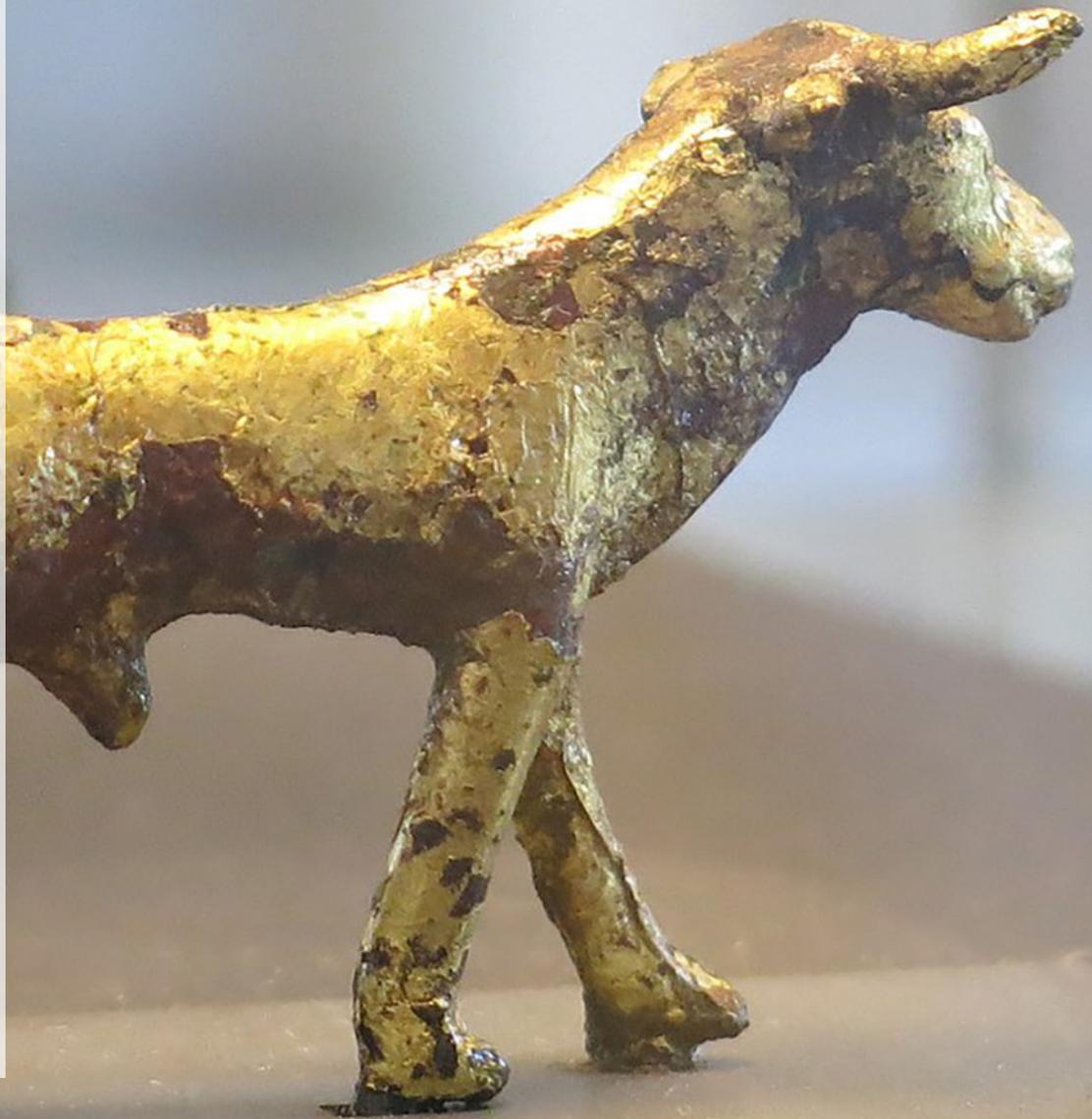
Rabbi Richard Borah

The sin of the golden calf is perhaps the central sin of the Jewish people and yet it is a difficult one to comprehend. The challenge of understanding it is multifaceted. First of all, how could the Jewish people who had so recently experienced the Exodus from Egypt through the miracles done on their behalf, as well as the splitting of the sea and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, descend so quickly into idolatry, simply because they perceived Moshe as being a bit late in returning from his ascent to obtain the Torah!

According to the Beis Halevi (Rav Yosef Dov Ber Soloveitchik) the sin of the golden calf wasn't actual idolatry, but instead the unauthorized construction of a place where the presence of God could dwell among the Jewish people. The Beis HaLevi states:

When they saw that Moshe had to mediate between themselves and Hashem, they wanted to create a place where Hashem could dwell among them, as in fact was the case after the mishkan (sanctuary) was built. Through their esoteric knowledge, they sought to determine what such a place would entail. But rather than relying upon their own knowledge, they consulted Aharon, whom they considered their superior. "Make us a god" (Shemos 32:1), they said, a resting place for the Shechinah (the Divine Presence).

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So according to the Beis HaLevi the sin of the golden calf was not idolatry per se, but the misconception that the Jewish people were able to build—without being commanded—a mishkan in which the Shechinah could reside. The Beis HaLevi states this mistake as follows:

The Israelites thus had good intentions. But they made one error. Man's actions enhance the structure of the cosmos only when they are commanded by the Torah. The actions involved in (the commanded-RB) building the (of the) mishkan caused a revelation of the Shechinah, but only because they expressed the Divine will.

The sin had its source in the desire of the Jewish people to come close to God. This desire can overwhelm the person and bring them to the brink of idolatry. One is reminded of Aaron's sons Nadav and Avihu who "offered strange fire to God" in their misguided passion to draw close to the Shechinah in ways that were not specifically commanded. This desire to come close to God and build their own mishkan would explain the seemingly strange method of their demanding of Aharon "Make us a god" (Shemot: 32:1). If the Jews were pursuing idolatry why would they go to Aharon, who was second only to Moshe in closeness to God to construct an idol! But if, on the other hand, they were seeking to create a proper mishkan for the Shechinah, then Aharon's greatness and wisdom make him the logical choice to guide this effort. It would also explain why Aharon might consent to be involved in this process rather than what we would expect: to refuse any involvement in idolatry and even embrace martyrdom if it was required of him.

The Beis HaLevi brings support for the connection between the golden calf and the mishkan from the statement in Shemos Rabba:

Through earrings they sinned, as it says "Break off the golden earrings in your wives' ears" (Shemot 32:2) and through earrings they achieved appeasement, as it says "They brought bracelets and earrings" (35:22).

The Beis HaLevi explains that the atonement was in the realization that in spite of Betzalel's (the Jewish people's inspired master craftsman) having the potential to build the mishkan correctly according to his esoteric knowledge, he did not, and only built



it exactly "as Hashem commanded him"—meaning that it was not only that the structure of the mishkan had to have a specific form, but that it must only come about through the following of a specific command of God. It is not humanity's decision, whether a resting place for the Shechinah shall exist among them. This place can only be prepared at the command of God. So the sin could be characterized as the Jewish people's error in believing that need creates permission. They felt that the overwhelmingly great need they felt in Moshe's absence for the presence of God to dwell among them, gave them the right to create a mishkan even without a command to do so. Need does not necessarily create a right to do something. Even an intense, almost unbearable sense of need does not create a right to engage in prohibited activities. Although their sin was a profound one, it is more understandable than to conclude that the Jewish people at this high point in their redemption journey from Egypt, descended into base idolatry.

There is an idea among our sages that the desire for idolatry is linked with the ability to attain the level of prophecy. This is very counter intuitive when we view the two phenomena from a value aspect, with prophecy being the highest attainment possible for the human being and idolatry being the lowest level of sin. But a useful analogy is that of the passion of love and murderous jealousy. A man may have such a great desire for a woman that any thought that the woman may desire another will send him into a frenzy of violence and murder. One would also think that one who has such passionate love for a woman would be the one least likely to harm her. But it is not so. The passion that is the source of the love is also the source of the jealousy and violence. So too, a person or a people that has such a great desire for a closeness to God may also be the one that is most likely to err in idolatry, such as Aharon's

sons Nadav and Avihu when they offered "strange fire" and the Jewish people with the golden calf. It is their great desire to be close to God that brings them to fatal error.

The Vilna Gaon stated "from the time they (the men of the Great Assembly) eradicated idolatry, prophecy ceased" (Seder Olam: Chapter 30). The Vilna Gaon is referring to the statement of the Talmud Bavli 69b that explains that after the destruction of the First Temple, due to idolatry, the sages prayed for and were granted the eradication of the desire for idolatry. Rabbi Elyahu E. Dessler in Michtav me-Eliyahu explains:

As long as the evil inclination (for idolatry) existed, in opposition, prophecy and revealed miracles flourished in Israel. One opposite the other the Lord has made (Ecclesiastes 7:14). There is at all times a balance between the forces of holiness and impurity. As long as there was prophecy in the world, through which sensate belief was attained, there were opposing sensate forces of impurity which moved to idolatry, such as the spirit of falsehood of prophets of Ba'al, magic, sorcery, etc. In this was free choice was preserved. And thus we see that at the beginning of the Second Temple the inclination to idolatry was purged, and correspondingly, prophecy too ceased from Israel (Michtav me-Eliyahu: III, 277-278)

Nachmanides (Ramban) explains that the transformation after the First Temple was one that moves from divine perception focused on prophetic imagination to one of rational argument and understanding which was the involvement of the sages. He states:

Even though the prophecy of visionaries was taken away, the prophecy of sages, via intellect, remains and they know the truth by the divine spirit within (Hiddushei Ramban, Baba Batra 12a)

So, in conclusion it can be posited that the Jewish people's sin of the golden calf was one that, though it may have had idolatrous elements within it, was not the result of a turning away from God, but, on the contrary, was due to the prophetic spirit that was powerful within them at the time but, at the same time. This quality made them profoundly susceptible to idolatry, in their great desire for a substantive expression of their connection to God. ■



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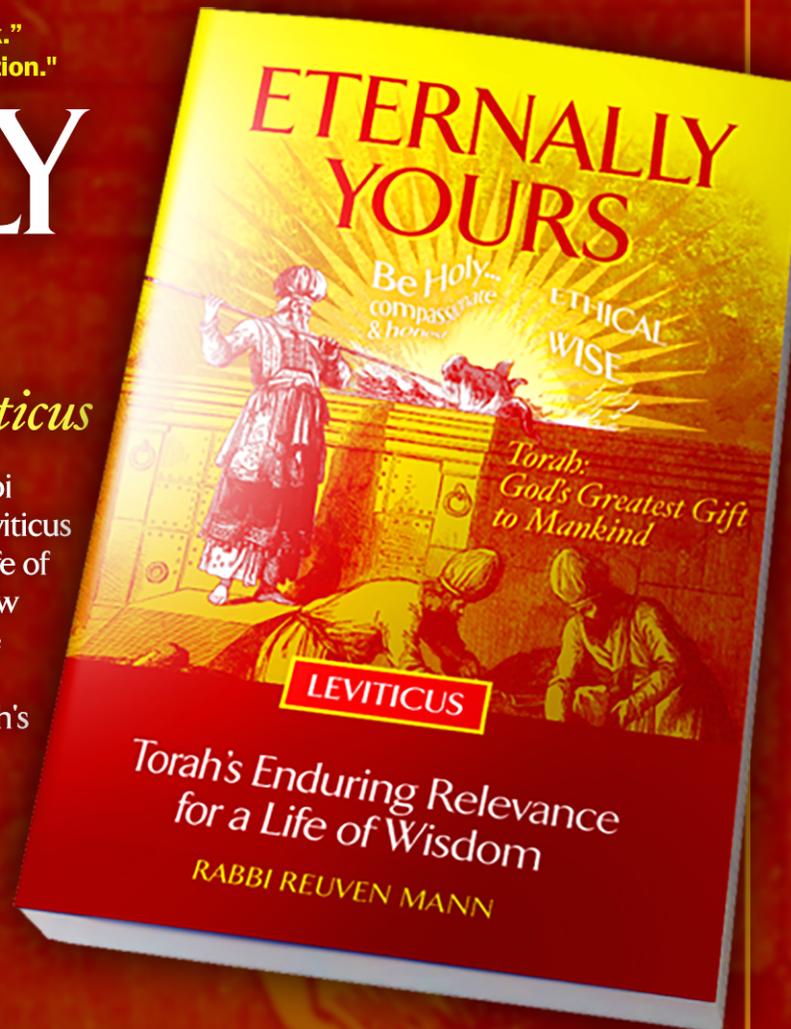
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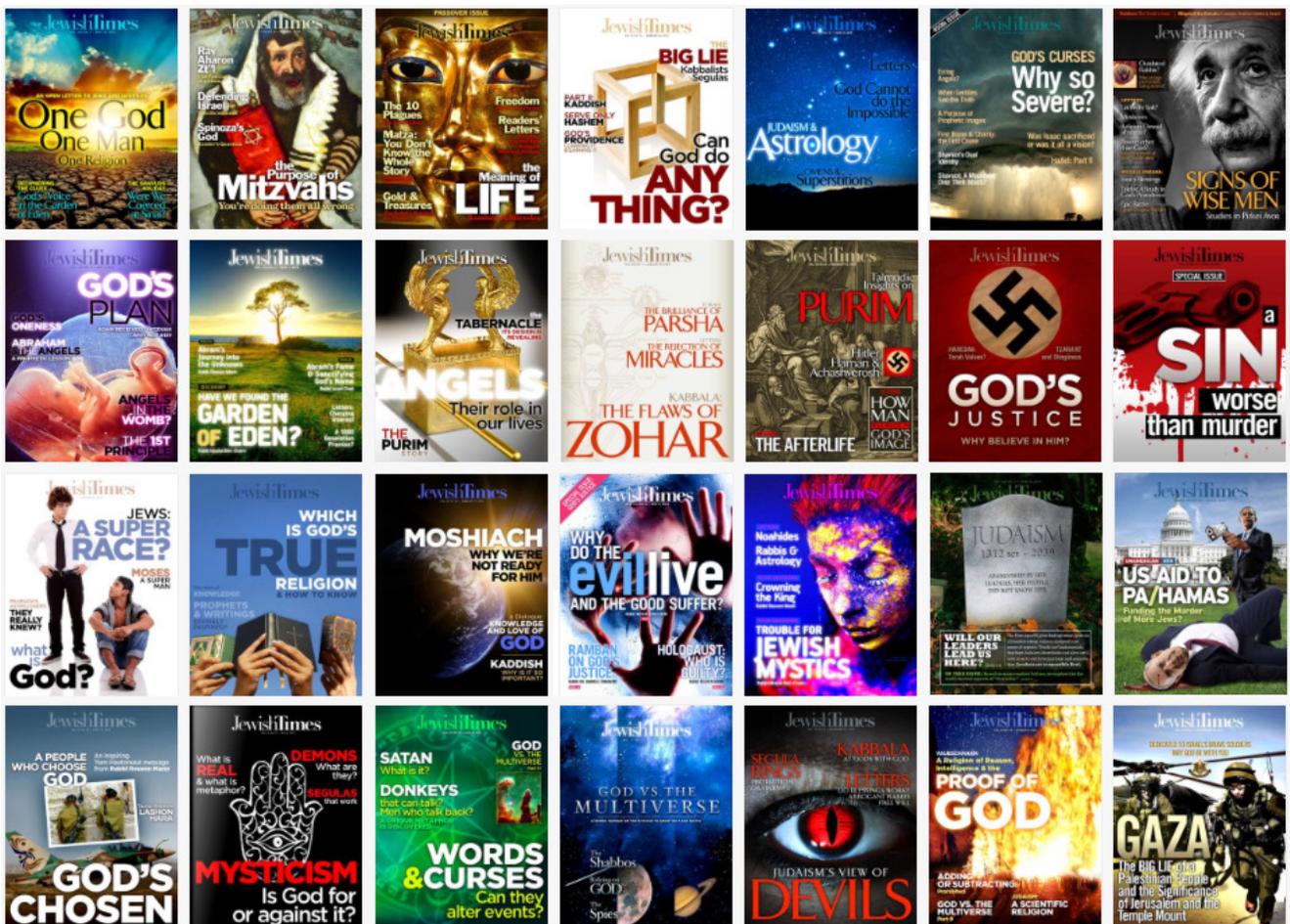
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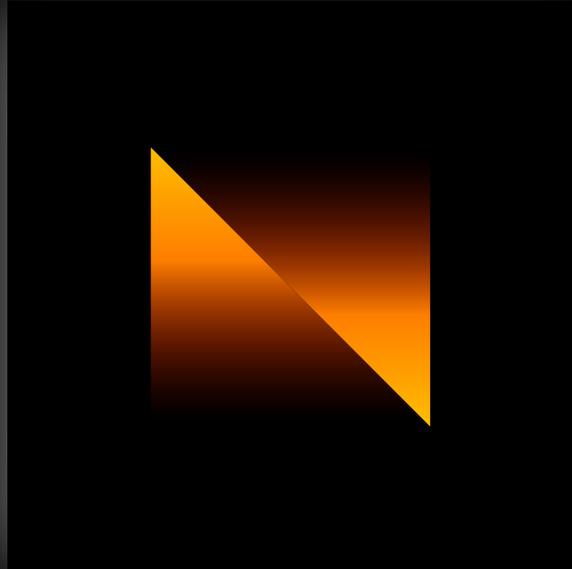
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