



# How did Tabernacle ADDRESS THE Gold Calf VIOLATION?

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14  
YEARS

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# JewishTimes

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## Weekly Parsha

# Vayakhel

RABBI BERNIE FOX

## The Prohibition against Melachah on Shabbat and Yom Tov

You should not kindle a fire in  
any of your dwellings on the  
Shabbat. (Shemot 35:3)

This pasuk tells us that one may

(continued on next page)

## Weekly Parsha

# SHABBOS

## & the Jewish IDENTITY

RABBI DR. DARRELL GINSBERG

Prior to presenting a halachic matter in his Mishneh Torah, Rambam always lists the relevant Torah-based commandments and prohibitions. With all the complexities that abound in the area of Hilchos Shabbos, the Rambam identifies only five total commandments, three of them prohibitions. One of these is the general prohibition of performing melocho, another involving walking outside a set boundary on Shabbos. The third one, though, is less common, but of extreme importance – the prohibition of Beis Din to mete out punishments on Shabbos, expressed primarily through the different types of executions.

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## Weekly Parsha

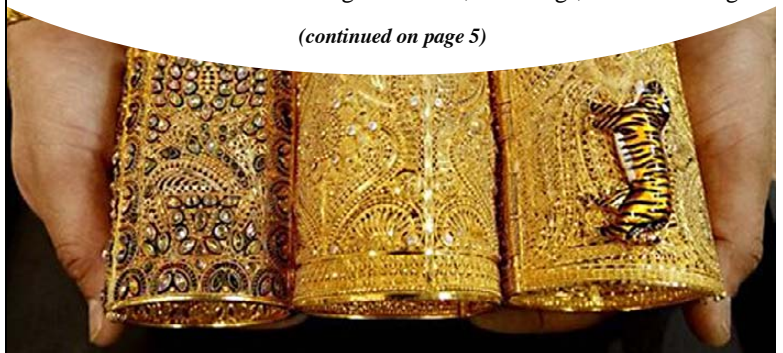


# OF Enduring VALUE

RABBI REUVEN MANN

This week's parsha, Vayakhel, describes the success of the plan to obtain the materials and very skilled labor necessary for the building of the Mishkan through voluntary donations of the people. Apparently, the prospect of contributing in some manner to this awesome enterprise struck a deep chord in the heart of the nation. The verses describe the great generosity which was displayed by the Jews. Thus it says, "Every man whose heart inspired him came, and everyone whose spirit motivated him brought the portion of Hashem for the work of the tent of meeting... The men came with the women everyone whose heart motivated him brought bracelets, nose rings, ...all sorts of gold

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(Vayakhel cont. from pg. 1)

## Weekly Parsha

## JewishTimes

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not kindle a fire on Shabbat. In other words, this pasuk informs us that creating fire – havarah – is one of the thirty-nine forms of melachah – creative work – prohibited on Shabbat. It is odd that the Torah finds it necessary to specify this melachah. The thirty-nine melachot are not enumerated in the Torah. Instead, they are derived from the Mishcan – the Tabernacle. Those functions that were fundamental to the construction of the Mishcan are included among the melachot. Havarah is one of these functions. Therefore, it seems reasonable that the kindling of fire should be one of the melachot. We should not need a special passage to inform us that havarah is a melachah. Why does the Torah specifically prohibit this melachah?

The commentaries offer a number of responses to this question. Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno suggests that havarah lacks one of the basic requirements necessary for an activity to be defined as a melachah. All melachot are creative activities. For example, the melachah of writing results in written letters. The melachah of sewing produces stitches. Kindling a flame is fundamentally destructive. The fuel is burned and consumed by the fire. It is not at all obvious that havarah should be included among the melachot. Therefore, the Torah specifies that creating fire is melachah.[1]

Nachmanides offers a different explanation for our pasuk. In order to understand his comments, some background is required. Shabbat is not the only occasion on which melachah is prohibited. It is also prohibited to perform melachah on Yom Tov – a festival. However, the prohibition on Yom Tov does not include all of the thirty-nine melachot. Those melachot that are related to ochel nefesh – those melachot that provide personal pleasure – are permitted. For example, it is permitted to cook on Yom Tov. This is because food provides personal enjoyment. Havarah is permitted on Yom Tov. This activity also is performed for the purpose of personal pleasure and is considered a melachah of ochel nefesh. Why are melachot of ochel nefesh permitted on Yom Tov? One of the fundamental differences between Shabbat and Yom Tov is that the observance of Yom Tov includes a requirement simchah – happiness. In

order to enable us to achieve this state of simchah, the melachot of ochel nefesh are permitted. The observance of Shabbat does not include an obligation of simchah. Nachmanides explains that our passage tells us that kindling fire is prohibited on Shabbat. This pronouncement teaches that the prohibition of melachah on Shabbat differs from the Yom Tov prohibition. On Shabbat, all thirty-nine melachot are prohibited. Even the melachot of ochel nefesh are included in the Shabbat prohibition.

Nachmanides further explains that it is not obvious that melachot of ochel nefesh should be included in the prohibition against melachah on Shabbat. Although the obligation of simchah does not extend to Shabbat, we are obligated in oneg – experiencing joy – on Shabbat. It is reasonable to assume that this obligation of oneg on Shabbat has a similar impact as the obligation of simchah on Yom Tov. We would expect the obligation of oneg to dictate that melachot of ochel nefesh should be permitted on Shabbat. This is the lesson of our passage. Despite the obligation of oneg on Shabbat, all thirty-nine melachot are prohibited – even those of ochel nefesh.[2]



Nachmanides does not discuss one important question. As explained above, the obligation of oneg on Shabbat is similar to the requirement of simchah on Yom Tov. Because of the obligation of simchah, those melachot related to ochel nefesh are not prohibited on Yom Tov. Why does not the obligation of oneg on Shabbat have the same impact? Why are the melachot of ochel nefesh prohibited on Shabbat?

Before answering this question, it is important to note that the sanctity of Yom Tov and Shabbat is expressed through the prohibition against melachah. All occasions that the Torah describes as sacred are characterized by this prohibition. Therefore, the melachah prohibition is elemental to the definition and character of these days. Our question suggests that there is a basic difference between the obligation of simchah on Yom Tov and oneg on Shabbat. Simchah is not merely an activity in which we engage on Yom Tov. The obligation of simchah – like the melachah prohibition – is part of the definition or character of

(continued on next page)



Yom Tov. Yom Tov is defined as a period of simchah. The requirement to refrain from the performance of melachah must be formulated in a manner that is consistent with and accommodates the simchah element of Yom Tov observance. Therefore, it is impossible for the Yom Tov prohibition of melachah to include the melachot of ochel nefesh. The inclusion of these melachot would result in an inconsistency in the fundamental character of the Yom Tov.

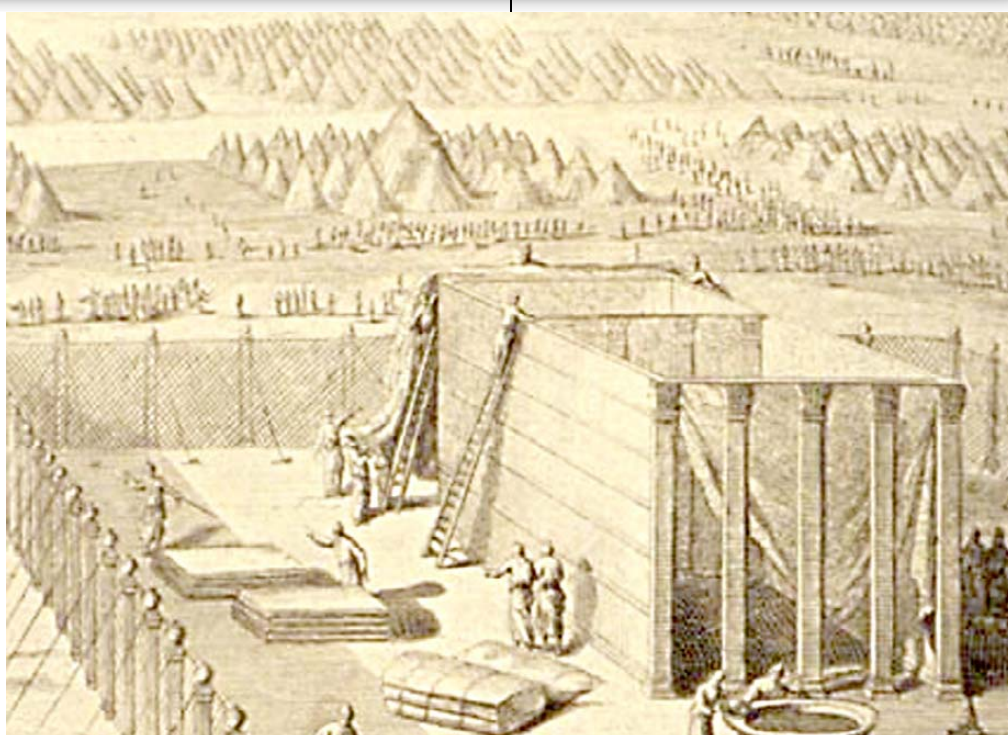
Oneg is an obligation on Shabbat. However, it is not part of the basic definition or character of the day. In other words, oneg is an activity that we perform on Shabbat. It is not elemental to the character of Shabbat. Therefore, the prohibition on Shabbat of the melachot of ochel nefesh does not contradict the nature or definition of Shabbat. Instead, the obligation of oneg must be fulfilled in a manner that accommodates the sanctity and character to Shabbat. It must be fulfilled without performance of those melachot associated with ochel nefesh.

An analogy will help understand this distinction. A clothing designer is considering fabrics and colors for a suit under design. He envisions a man's suit that will be worn on formal occasions. He chooses a dark wool fabric for the basic design. He then decides he should bring another subtle color into the design and adds a maroon windowpane pattern. Notice that the basic color for the suit was selected based upon the function for which the suit was designed. The second color was selected to enhance the primary one. Similarly, oneg – like the maroon of the suit – is an enhancement; it is not elemental. Therefore, it is observed in a manner that is consistent with the melachah prohibition. In contrast, the obligation of simchah on Yom Tov is comparable to the designer's vision of the suit's use. This purpose is fundamental to the suit's design; its color is selected to accommodate this objective. So too, the Yom Tov melachah prohibition is designed to accommodate the requirement of simchah.

### Moshe's Suspension of Contributions for the Mishkan

*And Moshe gave orders to make an announcement in the camp, "Let no man or woman bring any more material for the sacred offering." (Shemot 36:6)*

The nation responded to the request for donations of materials for the construction of the Mishkan. These donations were sufficient for creating the Mishkan and all of its components.



The craftsmen charged with the fashioning of the Mishkan reported to Moshe that they had received sufficient material. Upon receiving this news, Moshe announced that no more donations should be brought. The commentaries remark that an exact tally was kept of the donations. The purpose of this accounting was twofold. First, it was essential to secure sufficient materials. Second, Moshe did not wish to collect more than was needed. The importance of collecting sufficient materials is obvious. However, the above pasuk emphasizes that Moshe was equally concerned with not collecting excess materials. Once the needed materials were donated, Moshe immediately directed Bnai Yisrael to stop bringing donations. Why was this issue so crucial? Why was Moshe so deeply concerned with not accepting excess donations?

The commentaries offer various explanations. We will consider one of these responses. Gershonides explains that Moshe's concern was based on a principle found in the Talmud. The Talmud in Tractate Ketubot explains that a person should not donate more than one fifth of one's assets to charity.[3] Maimonides extends this principle to the performance of all mitzvot. A person should not spend more than one fifth of his wealth on the performance of any mitzvah. For example, in purchasing an animal for sacrifice, this limit applies. Maimonides offers an explanation for this restriction. A person should avoid being dependant on others for support. Therefore, one should not risk impoverishing himself.[4] Gershonides explains that Moshe's concern was based on this principle. He

did not want the people to bring more than was needed. He did not want anyone to become impoverished out of zeal to contribute to the Mishkan.

Gershonides offers an important insight into the restriction against spending an excess of one fifth of one's wealth in the performance of a mitzvah. He agrees with Maimonides' explanation of the restriction. One should not risk poverty and lose of independence. However, Gershonides asserts that there is a more fundamental explanation of the restriction. He explains that the Torah prohibits the performance of a mitzvah in a manner that leads to evil. Becoming impoverished through contributing to charity or performing a mitzvah is a negative or evil outcome. Gershonides further explains that such an evil outcome discourages others from performing the mitzvah.[5] ■

[1] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Shemot 35:3.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban/Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 35:3.

[3] Mesechet Ketubot 50a.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam/Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Erchin VeCharamin 8:13.

[5] Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag/Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1994), p 444.

The source for this prohibition is found in Parshas VaYakhel, when Moshe explains to Bnai Yisrael:

*"You must not kindle a fire in all your dwelling places on the day of Shabbos."*

Of course, at first glance, it is hard to see how this verse has any relevance whatsoever to Beis Din and executions. The Rambam (Sefer HaMitzvos, based on Sanhedrin 35a, Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 4:6 and Mechilta Shemos 35:3) elaborates on how this prohibition was derived from the verse. He explains that the issur of starting a fire really refers to the punishment of sereifa (a method of execution involving fire), which is then applied to the other methods of execution enacted by Beis Din. Since the Torah previously introduced the overall prohibition of melocho, which would include lighting a fire, the assumption is that the Torah is introducing a unique halacha. Finally, the phrase "in all your dwelling places" is used elsewhere in the Torah, where it refers to Beis Din – therefore, the same can be applied here. As a result of this prohibition, the entire judgment process is pushed off to the following week.

This helps explain the deduction from verse to practical halacha. But it still leaves an important question, namely, what is the necessity of this prohibition? What is the problem of carrying out these punishments?

In the Sefer Ha Chinuch (114), we find what appears to be an obscure explanation for this commandment:

*"At the root of the precept lies the reason that the Eternal Lord wished to honor this day, that all should find rest in it, even the sinners and the guilty. To give a parable: A great king summoned the people of the country one day to a feast, when he would not withhold entry from any man, and after the day of the feast he would sit in judgment. So is this matter: the Eternal Lord commanded us to hallow and honor the Sabbath day for our good, and to make us meritorious, as I have written above (32), This too is for the honor of the day."*

This passage raises numerous questions. Why should "the sinners and the guilty" be entitled to enjoy Shabbos? We are not talking about small crimes here – these are people who have committed capital offenses, ranging from murder to idol worship. Astonishingly, according to this reasoning, a person who violates Shabbos in front of an audience (befarhesia), which clearly indicates a complete refutation of Shabbos, would be granted this same reprieve, able to avoid the sentence of death for one more day. What type of idea is this?

Another issue has to do with the reference to the rest, or menucha, experienced on Shabbos. Assuming that somehow this is a grace period for the soon-to-be-executed, will he truly "find rest" this Shabbos? It seems more likely he will spend Shabbos contemplating his imminent death.

The concept of rest, or menucha, has a central role in the day of Shabbos. It is often assumed that menucha refers to physical rest, best personified by the overall increase in Shabbos afternoon naps experienced in Jewish communities worldwide. I am certainly not here to speak out against those. Yet, in the tefilas minchah on Shabbos, we make reference to menucha in a much different context. We speak of a "rest of love and magnanimity, a rest of truth and faith, a rest of peace and serenity and security and tranquility," concluding with the proposition that "through their [Bnai Yisrael's] rest, they will come to sanctify Your Name." It is with the utmost confidence that we can assume this is not referring to extra sleep. What, then, is this concept of menucha?

The idea of Shabbos is very much based on creating a certain type of mindset, best expressed in the transition from chol to kodesh, mundane to sanctified. In essence, our pursuits tied to the physical world abruptly stop, and our entire existences turn now towards the study of God as our Creator. To have a day when all of our thoughts and energies are to be directed towards God is a unique experience, a state of mind that cannot be achieved during our workday lives. This is the menucha of "truth," "magnanimity," and the other characteristics mentioned in the tefilah. It is the state where man is truly in line with his intended purpose in this world, the involvement in the study of God – and the stage is set for this on the day of Shabbos. When the Jew is able to internalize these concepts, he comes to sanctify the name of God.

The idea of menucha, then, refers to the state of mind one is able to achieve on this day. While this helps establish the intended thought process on Shabbos, we have to dig deeper to see how important Shabbos is before tackling the problem raised in the Sefer HaChinuch. At the end of Hilchos Shabbos (30:15), Rambam writes that Shabbos and idolatry are the two commandments that are equivalent to all the commandments listed in the Torah. Shabbos, is the permanent "os," or sign between God and Bnai Yisrael. Whereas a person who violates a commandment is considered a rasha, a person who violates Shabbos in the public venue is like someone who committed idolatry. The end result is that the person is essentially considered no different than a non-Jew.

The clear message from the Rambam is the distinct importance of Shabbos within the pantheon of Torah commandments. Why the comparison to idolatry? And what about the

comparison between the severity of Shabbos/idolatry versus the other "lesser" commandments? We usually perceive our identity as a Jew through our relationship to the system of halacha. It is our adherence to the commandments given at Sinai that serves as the yardstick of our distinctiveness. Yet there is a more fundamental identity that exists, one that, without which, renders in a sense our halachic responsibilities irrelevant. The acceptance of God is what gives us our philosophical identity, ultimately separating us from all other religions. Idolatry results in the destruction of this identity, and with it, the true meaning of being a Jew. The flip side of the coin is the adherence to Shabbos. On the seventh day of the week, we must remove ourselves from our normal pursuits, a life dictated by the offerings of the physical world, and turn to the world of chachmas Hashem. Idolatry is the denial of God, while adherence to Shabbos is the greatest acknowledgment of the reality of God's existence. This could be the reason why the Rambam ties these two together, and why they are so significant.

So far, we've established that the idea of menucha alludes to the state of mind achieved on the day of Shabbos. The Rambam goes further, explaining why this state of mind is one of the foundations of our very philosophical identity as a Jew. How does this all fit into the Sefer HaChinuch's explanation?

The scenario with the king and the feast serves to demonstrate that regardless of the status of the citizen, all his subjects were treated equally—they were all invited. The intended purpose of this analogy is to show, of course, that there is no distinction between the sinner and non-sinner when it comes to the day of Shabbos. Why not? Furthermore, how does the role of Beis Din fit into all of this?

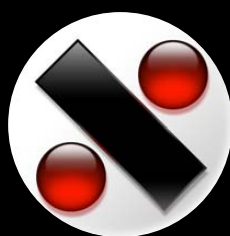
Beis Din exists within the halachic system, a product of that very system, and its primary function is to ensure that Bnai Yisrael abide by this system. While their powers are sweeping, the Torah is presenting a fundamental limitation in their actions. They have no right to prevent a person from experiencing the menucha found in the day of Shabbos. It is not that the person necessarily will abide by the dictates of Shabbos, but it is part of the philosophical DNA of the Jew to have the opportunity every seventh day to participate in the experience. In a sense, the halachic world personified by Beis Din is being delineated from the more central idea that defines the Jew. The Rambam's separation of Shabbos and idolatry from the rest of the halachic system reinforces this point. To carry out the execution on Shabbos would not just prevent this individual from this opportunity of Shabbos. It would be demonstrative of the superiority of the system of halacha over this fundamental that comes to define us as Jews. ■



ornaments...Every man and woman whose heart motivated them to bring for any of the work that Hashem had commanded to make.....brought a free willed offering to Hashem." The people were extremely giving of their treasure and skills. The donations got so massive that a special call went out instructing them not to bring anything more. What can we learn from this phenomenal display of giving?

The Rabbis say, "Who is wealthy? One who rejoices in his portion." They meant to say that 'wealth' cannot be measured by numbers. One can have millions but be empty, miserable and poor. On the other hand, a person can have meager resources and yet feel very content and satisfied. Of crucial importance is one's inner state of mind. G-d has endowed man with talents and abilities as well as with material resources. Man has an innate need to participate in matters that he regards as "important." This stems from the instinctive feeling that life has a larger purpose and that each person has a special mission. Many people have all the creature comforts one can imagine and yet feel unfulfilled. In moments of honesty they realize the shallowness of self indulgence and long for an opportunity to use their talents and resources in something of eternal value. The construction of the Mishkan was an educational experience for the Jews. Hashem had liberated them from the worst condition, enslavement to base and corrupt people. He had transformed them into free people with a lot of material wealth. The teaching was: do not remain stagnant and believe that just "breathing free" and luxuriating in the "good" life will make you happy. The freedom granted was an opportunity to develop and use the skills which had been stifled by the Egyptians. The Jews were invited to participate in the construction of the most sublime edifice, the Mishkan, which would be the "dwelling place" of Hashem, amongst them. The hearts of the people were inspired with a great sense of generosity. All those with special skills and talents came forth to utilize their abilities which they recognized had been granted them for just such a purpose. There is nothing more gratifying than using one's wisdom and skill in advancing a noble cause. Imagine the joy in using your mind to discover the cure for a crippling disease, or to help someone solve a vexing problem, or to establish an institution which will provide tremendous benefit to countless people.

In responding to the call of building the Mishkan the Jews learned that happiness can only come from developing our G-d given skills and dedicating them to His service. It is with regard to this type of giving that the Book of Proverbs says, "The person of chesed benefits himself." It is great to have wisdom, skill, and resources. It is even greater to have an opportunity to utilize them in a cause which provides an eternal benefit for mankind and fulfillment for oneself. -Shabbat Shalom ■



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## Weekly Parsha

Parshas  
Vayakhel

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM



the

# TEMPLE

*a Response to the*

# GOLDEN CALF



In Exodus, 25:8, God instructs man, "Make Me a Temple and I will dwell among you."

Sforno comments on the purpose of the Temple in 25:9 as follows: "In order that I may dwell in your midst, to speak to you and to accept your prayers and the (Temple) service of Israel, not as the matter was prior to the Golden Calf, as was stated, (Exod. 20:21) "In every place that you mention My name, I will come to you and bless you." Sforno says that prior to the sin of the Golden Calf, the statement in Yisro, "In every place that you mention My name..." teaches that God's relationship to man was that anyone, anywhere, would have his prayers recognized by God. But subsequent to the Golden Calf, a new system was demanded, "In order that I may dwell in your midst, to speak to you and to accept your prayers and the (Temple) service of Israel..."

Sforno teaches a startling concept; the Temple may have had no objective need, but was a concession in response to the Golden Calf. If the Jews hadn't sinned with that Calf, the structure of Temple, the ark, the menorah and all the vessels might not have been commanded, according to

Sforno. "Make Me a Temple and I will dwell among you" teaches that after the Calf, without the Temple, God will not dwell with us. One might suggest this is an impossible theory, as the Temple appears in the Torah before the sin of the Calf. But Rashi addresses this in Exodus 31:18, "There is no chronology in the Torah; the Golden Calf preceded the command of the work of the Temple by many days..." Rashi again makes mention (Deut. 10:1) that it was only on Moses' descent from Mount Sinai did God first command him on the work of the Tabernacle. It was at the time of his descent that the Jews had already sinned with the Golden Calf.

What was the precise sin of the Golden Calf, and how does the institution of the Tabernacle and Temple rectify the problem? Sforno also teaches that prior to the Calf, one's prayer was readily noticed by God, afterwards it was not. This needs an explanation.

A few other relationships are seen between the sin of the Calf and the Temple/Tabernacle, which supports Sforno's explanation. Those who sinned with the Calf were not allowed to serve in the Temple. For this reason, the entire tribe of the Levites who abstained from the sin of the calf merited Temple service. One might suggest a simple explanation; idolaters are prohibited to officiate in God's service. But perhaps there is more to this command. Additionally, no gold was used in the service of the Holy of Holies, due to the reason that "the accused cannot be come the defender". That is, the accused - the gold (representative of the Gold Calf) cannot be part of man's service seeking atonement. One does not mention his gravest sins when seeking pardon for his offenses. Similarly, the Torah teaches that the High Priest's garb including gold must not be worn when entering the Holy of Holies. Prior to entering, he must change into his white garments. Again we see a tie between Temple law and the sin of the Golden Calf.

The Torah teaches that the Jews gave their jewelry for the creation of the Calf, (Exod., 32:3) "And they removed, all the people, the rings of gold, that were in their ears, and they brought it to Aaron." We also learn that the Tabernacle was created from the peoples' donation of Terumah, "...from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take my Terumah". Is there any parallel between these two acts of giving, that the Torah wished to record both?

Another verse in response to the sin of the Calf reads "And Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it

the 'Tent of Meeting', and it would be that anyone seeking God would, go out to the Tent of Meeting that was outside the camp." (Exodus 33:7) This verse teaches that prior to the sin, God communicated with Moses within the camp. But after the sin, this close relationship could no longer be. Moses therefore demonstrated this by his removal of his tent to outside the camp of the nation. What may we learn from this act of moving the tent? Isn't it clearly stated that whoever sought God would exit the camp? So God was still found. What purpose is there in distancing the Tent of Meeting from the people?

To clarify, Sforno is not suggesting that without the sin of the Golden Calf, there would be no institution of sacrifice. Sacrifice dates back to the first men. Adam's children brought sacrifices. Noah, Abraham and so many other figures sacrificed long before the Golden Calf. To clarify, Sforno is suggesting that the institution of Temple alone is due to the sin of the Calf, but he agrees that sacrifice always existed. So our main question is how the Temple addresses the problem of the Golden Calf sin.

How do we begin to answer this main question? The first step would be to understand the sin. We should look for an expression of the sin exhibited by the sinners. This would make for accurate analysis. God's own words describing the Jews' precise flaw would provide an even better clue. Fortunately in this case, we have both.(1) The mixed multitude said about the Calf, (Exod. 32:4) "These are your gods Israel, who took you up from Egypt." Later, after the giving of the tablets to Moses, God says to him concerning the Jews' worship of the Calf, (Exod. 32:8) "They have turned quickly from the path which I have commanded them, they made for themselves a molten calf, and they prostrated to it and sacrificed to it and they said, 'These are your gods Israel, who took you up from Egypt.'" God purposefully repeated this statement in His Torah, "These are your gods Israel, who took you up from Egypt." I believe this is to point us to the Jews' precise error.

God is teaching us that the Jews' sin was due to their wish to relate to God in some tangible form. Ramban and Or Hachaim dismiss the notion that the Jews thought the Calf to be God. Ramban said, "no fool would say the gold that was in their ears is what brought them up out of Egypt." (Exod. 32:4) Ramban explains that the Jews did not say the Calf was God, but that this Calf was some force of God.(2) Or Hachaim says on "they turned aside", that they violated "you shall not make intermediaries." Both Ramban and Or Hachaim agree that the Jews admitted to God's

(continued on next page)

existence, and that this Calf was not viewed by the Jews as God. The Jews' error was their belief that the Golden Calf had forces which effect reality.

Consider the Jews words when they felt Moses was no longer returning, "...Moses the man who took us up from Egypt, we know not what has happened to him." Why did they mention Moses "the man"? This statement too points to the Jews' inability to relate to God as he is, above the physical, "metaphysical". They became attached to the "man" of Moses. When they miscalculated Moses' stay on Mt. Sinai, they were confronted with a false belief that Moses was gone. They feared not having some tangible leader, so they created the Golden Calf and said this was responsible some how for their exodus. They desired something physical to relate to. This is not tolerated in Judaism, and many have been killed (Samuel I, 6:19(3)) because of their projection of physical qualities onto God. Judaism demands above all else that we do not project any physical nature onto God, (Deut. 4:15) "And guard yourselves exceedingly for your lives, for you did not see any form on the day God spoke to you on Horeb (Sinai) from amidst flames." The Torah stresses how fundamental it is to know that God is not physical. We saw no physical objects when we heard God speak to us on Sinai.

Maimonides third principle of his 13 Principles reads:

*"Principle III. The Denial of Corporeality in Connection with God.*

*This is to accept that this Oneness that we have mentioned above (2) is not a body and has no strength in the body, and has no shape or image or relationship to a body or parts thereof. This is why the Sages of blessed memory said with regards to heaven there is no sitting, nor standing, no awakens, nor tiredness. This is all to say that He does not partake of any physical actions or qualities. And if He were to be a body then He would be like any other body and would not be God. And all that is written in the holy books regarding descriptions of God, they are all anthropomorphic. Thus said our great Rabbis of blessed memory The Torah spoke in man's language (i.e. using human terms so that man would have some understanding). And the Rabbis have already spoken at length on this issue. This is the third pillar and is attested to by the verse "For you saw no image" meaning that you did not see an image or any form when you stood at Sinai because as we have just said He has no body nor power of the body."*

Perhaps now we may answer how the Temple addresses the sin of the Golden Calf. The Temple



had many unique qualities and vessels. But most central was the fact that it was constructed of two rooms; a Holies, and a Holy of Holies. In this second room, no man was allowed to enter, save the high priest on Yom Kippur, and even then, only with smoking incense, a veil. Sinai too was accompanied by smoke and darkness. God created His "appearance" as cloud. In all cases, we are taught that there is an impenetrable veil - cloud - between God and man. "For man cannot know me when alive." (Exod. 33:20) Man must accept his mind's shortcomings, his inability to know God. We have but five senses of perception. All that cannot be perceived through these senses is completely out of our range of knowledge. In a dark room, vision does not function, as vision requires light. God is not physical, similarly, He cannot be perceived by human sensation, which requires physical stimulation.

The sin of the Golden Calf was man's futile attempt to grasp what man cannot grasp. When man assumes there is a sensory connection between God and the physical, man forfeits his purpose. His existence is worthless, as all he knows or learned in his life, to him, stems from an imagined physical god, not the true metaphysical God. His knowledge is completely inaccurate. His life is wasted due to his incorrect notions of God. He deserves death. Therefore, those who worshiped the Calf were killed, just as those who looked into the Ark when it was returned by the Philistines. (Samuel I, 6:19) In both cases, man assumed something physical in connection with God. In truth, the underlying flaw is man's overestimation in his own knowledge. In both cases the sinners felt all must be within their grasp, including God. They could not accept human inability.

We mentioned that the Temple has two rooms, one of which is off limits. The Temple attempts to teach man through man's distance from a certain

room, that man must admit complete ignorance about the nature of God's existence. Even more, man must not even try to approach any understanding of God's existence - it is impossible for our minds to apprehend, and is "off limits". We cannot know Him. A location, the Holy of Holies, coupled with the command never to enter, opposes man's assumption that God is approachable, and teaches that in fact, we cannot fathom God's existence. What we do know concerning God, is as Maimonides explains, is what He is not. We can only have negative knowledge of God. That is, we know He is not physical, He has no emotions, He occupies no place, He is not "in" this world, etc. Te Rabbis say, "He is the 'place' of the world, and the world is not His place." This means that God is the "place" or source of the world, but He occupies no place. He is not physical.

Prior to the sin, the people had not demonstrated a false notion of God. Therefore, as Sforno states, in any place they called to God, He responded. This is because they were calling on the true God. However, subsequent to their sin, they corrupted their view of God, and he therefore could not answer. They did not call to "Him", but to an imagined idea of God. An imagination cannot answer someone's call. Moses' removal of his Tent of Meeting was a demonstration that there was a separation between God and the people after the sin of the Golden Calf.

Perhaps we can also answer why the Temple was constructed from free donations. Such an act demonstrates that the donor is not attached to the precious metals, gems, and materials, but he gives freely. In fact, his focus on physical property is replaced by an act of following a Divine command, to build a Temple to God. Such a donation enables man to remove his grip on the physical, which the sinners could not accomplish. Man is also perfected by this display of following God's commands, not man's own fantasies. ■

#### Footnotes:

(1) But even the Jews' sin is recorded by God's divine words, so in fact, both are God's clues for our study.

(2) Either notion is a corruption in our view of God, and is prohibited.

(3) The Jews looked into the ark upon its return from the Philistines. This demonstrated their belief that there is something to be seen in relationship to God. They harbored a notion that God is connected with the physical. A large amount of Jews were punished there with death by God's hand.



## Remain competitive, or lose sales.

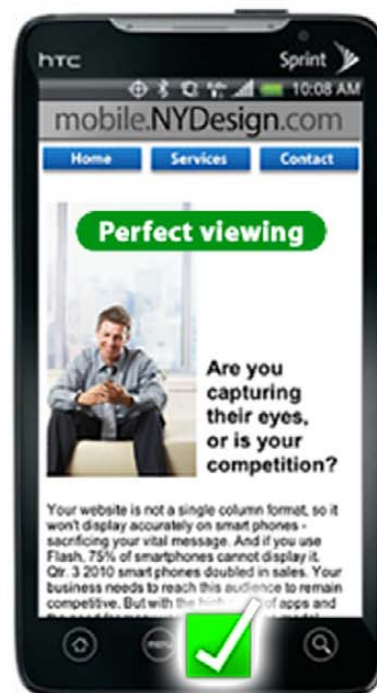
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