

Exodus Chapter 32

1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him: 'Up, make us a god who shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.'

2 And Aaron said unto them: 'Break off the golden rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.'

3 And all the people broke off the golden rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

4 And he received it at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it a molten calf; and they said: 'This is thy god, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'

5 And when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said: 'To-morrow shall be a feast to the LORD.'

6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to make merry. {P}

7 And the LORD spoke unto Moses: 'Go, get thee down; for thy people, that thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt, have dealt corruptly;

8 they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed unto it, and said: This is thy god, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'

9 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people.

א וַיֵּרָא הָעָם, כִּי-בִשְׁשׁ מִיּוֹם לְרִדְתּוֹ מִן-הַהָר; וַיִּקְהַל הָעָם עַל-אַהֲרֹן, וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּמָה עֲשֵׂה-לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ לְפָנֵינוּ-- כִּי-זֶה מִיּוֹם הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, לֹא יָדַעְנוּ מָה-הָיָה לוֹ .

ב וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלֵהֶם, אַהֲרֹן, פָּרְקוּ גִזְמֵי הַזָּהָב, אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵי נְשֵׁיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם וּבְנֹתֵיכֶם; וְהָבִיאוּ אֵלָי .

ג וַיִּתְּפָרְקוּ, כָּל-הָעָם, אֶת-גִּזְמֵי הַזָּהָב, אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם; וַיָּבִיאוּ, אֶל-אַהֲרֹן .

ד וַיִּקַּח מִיָּדָם, וַיִּצַר אֶתוֹ בַּחֲרֹט, וַיַּעֲשֵׂהוּ, עֵגֶל מִסִּכָּה; וַיֹּאמְרוּ--אֱלֹהֵי אֵל הָיִךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלוֹךְ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם .

ה וַיֵּרָא אַהֲרֹן, וַיְבֹן מִזְבֵּחַ לְפָנָיו; וַיִּקְרָא אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר, חַג לַיהוָה מָחָר .

ו וַיִּשְׁפִּימוּ, מִמַּחֲרָת, וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת, וַיִּגְשׂוּ שְׁלָמִים; וַיֵּשֶׁב הָעָם לֶאֱכֹל וּשְׂתוֹ, וַיִּקְמוּ לְצַחֲקוֹ . } פ {

ז וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה: לֵךְ-רֵד--כִּי שַׁחַת עַמְּךָ, אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלִיתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם .

ח סָרוּ מִהָר, מִן-הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָם--עָשׂוּ לָהֶם, עֵגֶל מִסִּכָּה; וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ-לוֹ, וַיִּזְבְּחוּ-לוֹ, וַיֹּאמְרוּ, אֱלֹהֵי אֵל הָיִךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלוֹךְ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם .

ט וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה: רְאִיתִי אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה, וְהִנֵּה עַם-קָשֶׁה-עֹרֶף הוּא .

TOPICS IN THE WEEKLY PORTION:
PARASHAT KI TISAH:
THE SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF
The Sixteenth Street Synagogue – March 7, 2007
Gavriel Bellino

תלמוד בבלי מסכת גיטין דף לו/ב

דאמר עולא עלובה כלה שזינתה בקרב חופתה

Said Ulla: It is a miserable bride who prostitutes herself under the very wedding canopy.

ספר שיר השירים פרק א

(יב) עד שְׁהִמְלֵךְ בְּמִסְבּוֹ נִרְדִּי נִתַּן רִיחוֹ:

While the King was still at His banquet, my nard gave forth its fragrance.

רש"י שיר השירים פרק א פסוק יב

(יב) עד שהמלך במסבו - משיבה כנסת ישראל ואומרת כל זה אמת טובה גמלתני ואני גמלתיך רעה כי בעוד המלך על השלחן מסבת חופתו. נרדי נתן ריחו - חילוף להבאיש בעוד שהשכינה בסיני קלקלתי בעגל ולשון חבה כתב הכתוב נתן ריחו ולא כתב הבאיש או הסריח לפי שדבר הכתוב בלשון נקיה,

WHILE THE KING WAS STILL AT HIS BANQUET - The Assembly of Israel replies that all this was Good that You provided me, and I did wrong unto You, that while the King was at the wedding banquet, MY NARD GAVE FORTH ITS FRAGRANCE – It changed to stink when the Shekhinah was still on Sinai and I was blemished by the Calf. And the language of love within the verse, GAVE FORTH ITS FRAGRANCE, and doesn't say that it stank or went foul because Scripture speaks in clean speech.

ילקוט שמעוני תהלים - פרק ג - רמז תרכה

"רבים א' מרים לנפשי אין ישועתה לו באל' הים סלה:"... רבנן פתרון קריא בעובדי אלילים ולמה הוא קורא אותם רבים קמים הוי המוון עמים, רבים אומרים לנפשי אומרים לשיראל אומה ששמעה מאלהיה לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים לסוף ארבעים יום אמרו לעגל אלה אלהיך ישראל יש לו ישועה אין ישועתה לו באלהים סלה,

"Many there are that say of my soul: there is no salvation for him in God. Selah." The Rabbis interpreted the verse to refer to idol worshippers. Why are they termed "many"? - In accordance with that which is stated (Isaiah 17, 12) "Ah, the uproar of many peoples". "Many there are that say of my soul" - they say of Israel: The nation that heard from its God "thou shalt not have any other gods", and at the end of forty days said to the calf "these are thy gods O Israel" - is there salvation for it? - "There is no salvation for him in God".

ספר תהילים פרק קו

(יט) יַעֲשׂוּ עֵגֶל בָּחֹרֶב וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְמִסְכָּה:
(כ) וַיִּמְירוּ אֶת כְּבוֹדָם בְּתַבְנִית שׂוֹר אֲכָל עֵשֶׂב:

19 And the made a calf in Horeb, and the bowed down to a molten creation.

20 And they exchanged their glory (Glory?) for the image of a bull that feeds on grass.

פרקי דרבי אליעזר פרק מז

וכשקבלו ישראל את התורה ר"ל עשרת הדברות לאחר ארבעים יום שכחו את אלהיהם ואמרו לאהרן המצריים היו נושאין את אלהיהם ומשוררין ומזמרין לפניו ורואין אותו לפניהם קום עשה לנו אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו כשקוין המצריים ונראה אותו לפנינו שנ' קום עשה לנו אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו

Forty days after accepting the Ten Commandments the Israelites forgot their God and said to Aaron: The Egyptians carried their gods with them, sang to them and were able to see them; make us a god like those of the Egyptians which we can see right in front of us, as it is stated: "They said, rise make us a god".

תלמוד בבלי מסכת עבודה זרה דף נג/ב

פלחו ישראל לעגל גלו אדעתייהו דניחא להו בעבודת כוכבים

By worshipping the calf the Israelites indicated that they accepted idolatry.

Avraham ben haRambam:

Evidently that was what they had asked him for. I have a tradition from my father and teacher of blessed memory that this was because they still held fast to their astrological beliefs, being convinced that they had left Egypt under the zodiacal sign of the Bull or that their destiny was governed by some other superstitious, idolatrous astrological notion.

רש"י על שמות פרק לב פסוק א

אשר ילכו לפנינו - אלהות הרבה איוו להם:

WHO WILL GO BEFORE US They wanted to have many gods.

רש"י על שמות פרק לב פסוק א

(א) כי בשש משה - כתרגומו לשון איחור וכן בשש רכבו (שופטים ה) ויחילו עד בוש (שם ג) כי כשעלה משה להר אמר להם לסוף ארבעים יום אני בא בתוך ו' שעות כסבורים הם שאותו יום שעלה מן המנין הוא והוא אמר להם שלימים מ' יום ולילו עמו ויום עלייתו אין לילו עמו שהרי בז' בסיון עלה נמצא יום מ' בי"ז בתמוז בט"ז בא השטן וערבב את העולם והראה דמות חשך ואפילה וערבוביא לומר ודאי מת משה לכך בא ערבוביא לעולם אמר להם מת משה שכבר באו שש שעות ולא בא וכו' כדאית' במס' שבת (דף פט) וא"א לומר שלא טעו אלא ביום המעונן בין קודם חצות בין לאחר חצות שהרי לא ירד משה עד יום המחרת שנאמר וישכימו ממחרת ויעלו עולות:

THAT MOSES DELAYED. The word (BSS) is to be understood as it is rendered by Targum Onkelos, an expression of "lateness." Likewise, the word BSS in the phrase, "Why does his chariot come late," and the word BSS in the phrase, "And they waited until it was late." They thought Moses was late, because when Moses went up to the mountain he said to them, "At the end of forty days, I will come within the first six hours of the day." They thought that the day he ascended was part of the count, -but he had told them "forty- full days," forty days along with the nights. But the day that he ascended did not have its night with it, for he ascended on the seventh of Sivan. Thus, the fortieth day was on the seventeenth of Tammuz. On the sixteenth, Satan came and confused the world, and displayed an image of darkness, gloom, and confusion, to imply, "Moses must certainly have died, that is why confusion has come to the world." He said to them, "Moses has died, for six hours have passed and he has not come," as it says in Tractate Shabbos. It is impossible to say that they knew which day Moses was due to descend but they only erred on a cloudy day, failing to distinguish between before midday and after midday for Moses did

not descend until the day after they made the Calf, as it says, "They arose early the next day after they made the Calf and they brought up burnt-offerings."

כי זה משה האיש - כמין דמות משה הראה להם השטן שנושאים אותו באויר רקיע השמים:
FOR THIS MOSES, THE MAN. Satan showed them a sort of image of Moses that they were carrying (him) in the space of the firmament of the heavens.

אשר העלנו מארץ מצרים - והיה מורה לנו הדרך אשר נעלה בה עתה צריכין אנו לאלהות אשר ילכו לפנינו:
WHO BROUGHT US UP FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT. And would show us the way on which we should ascend from Egypt. Now, in his absence, we need gods who will go before us.

Yehudah Halevi, The Kuzari (I, 97)

All the people in those times worshipped images. Even the philosophers who demonstrated the unity and existence of the Deity were unable to dispense with an image to which they directed their worship. They explained to the masses that this image attracted some divine quality to be shown the same reverence we give to our holy places. The masses could only be persuaded to accept the worship of a tangible image. The children of Israel waited for Moses to bring them down something tangible from his communion with the Almighty, as he had promised them, to focus their worship, on the lines of the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire which accompanied them on their departure from Egypt. The people heard the Ten Commandments and Moses went up the Mount to bring down the tablets and make them an ark to constitute for them a tangible symbol containing the Covenant of God. The people were left waiting for Moses to come down without having changed their manner, ornaments or garments since the time they had stood at the foot of the Mount during the Revelation. But they had remained as they were, waiting for Moses who was forty days late, not having taken with him any food and having left them with the intention of returning the same day. Then some of the people were overcome with frustration and dissension was sown until some individuals were prompted to ask for a tangible object of worship in the manner of the other nations without repudiating God who had brought them out from Egypt, merely requesting it should be placed before them to gaze upon when they related the wonders of their God ... as we do in with the sky.

Their offence lay in the fashioning of an image which had been forbidden them and in attributing Divine sanctity to the product of their own desires and hands without being commanded to do so by God. In extenuation of their sin we should remember the lack of unanimity which preceded it and the fact that the worshippers of the Golden Calf constituted only 3,000 out of a mass of 600,000 persons. But the excuse of the leaders who helped in making the Calf was that they did so for the purpose of distinguishing between the believer and disbeliever in order to put to death those caught actually worshipping it. Their culpability lay in leading the rebellion from the realm of thought into that of deed.

Their sin did not constitute a total repudiation of the service of He who brought them out of Egypt, but was rather a partial repudiation of some of His commands. The Almighty had warned them against making images and they had made one instead of waiting. They themselves had no right to determine the mode of worship and make an altar and sacrifices in accordance with it. Their conduct can be compared to the parable of the fool that we mentioned who entered the doctor's dispensary and himself prescribed the drugs, thereby killing the patients who would have been saved by being given the proper doses by the doctor himself. The people did not intend to commit idolatry but imagined that they were striving to worship the true God.

Exodus Chapter 24

12 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Come up to Me into the mount and be there; and I will give thee the tables of stone, and the law and the commandment, which I have written, that thou mayest teach them.'

יב וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, עֲלֵה אֵלַי הַהָרָה--וְהִנֵּה-שָׁמָּה; וְאָתַנְתָּ לְךָ אֶת-לַחַת הָאֲבָנִים, וְהַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת, אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתִּי, לְהוֹרֹתָם.

13 And Moses rose up, and Joshua his minister; and Moses went up into the mount of God.

יג וַיָּקָם מֹשֶׁה, וַיְהוֹשֵׁעַ מִשְׁרָתוֹ; וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה, אֶל-הַר הָאֵלֹהִים.

14 And unto the elders he said: 'Tarry ye here for us, until we come back unto you; and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whosoever hath a cause, let him come near unto them.'

יד וְאֶל-הַזְקֵנִים אָמַר שְׁבוּ-לִנְוֹ בְּזֶה, עַד אֲשֶׁר-נָשׁוּב אֵלֵיכֶם; וְהִנֵּה אֶהְרֹן וְחֹזֵר עִמָּכֶם, מִי-בַעַל דְּבָרִים יִגָּשׁ אֲלֵהֶם.

ספר שמות פרק כג

(כ) הִנֵּה אֲנִי שׁ לַח מְלָאֲךְ לְפָנֶיךָ לְשֹׁמְרֶךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וְלִהְבִּיאֲךָ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הִכַּנְתִּי:
20 Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

ספר שמות פרק כג

(כ) הִנֵּה אֲנִי שׁ לַח מְלָאֲךְ לְפָנֶיךָ לְשֹׁמְרֶךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וְלִהְבִּיאֲךָ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הִכַּנְתִּי:
Behold, I am sending a mal'ach - lefanecha [before you] - to guard you and bring you to the place that I have made ready.

ספר שמות פרק כג

(כג) כִּי יֵלֶךְ מְלָאֲכִי לְפָנֶיךָ וְהִבִּיאֲךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ וְהִפְרֹזִי וְהִפְנַעְנִי חַחוּי וְהִיבֹסִי וְהִכַּחַדְתִּיו:
For My angel will go before you, and bring you to the Land..." (23:23)

ספר שמות פרק כד

(ד) וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי יְדֹוּ וַיִּשְׁכַּם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּבְנוּ מִזְבֵּחַ תַּחַת הַהָר וּשְׁתֵּים עָשָׂר מִצְבֵּה לְשִׁנָּיִם עֹשֶׂה שְׁבֻטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
(ה) וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת נְעָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זְבָחִים שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה וַיָּבִיאוּ בָּנִים וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זְבָחִים שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה:
4 And Moses wrote all the words of God, and they woke up early in the morning, and they built an altar at the foot of the mountain and twelve monuments for the twelve tribes of Israel.
5 And he sent the youths of the Children of Israel and they offered burnt-offerings, and brought bulls as peace-offerings.

(יא) וְאֵל אֲצִילֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שְׁלַח יְדוֹ וַיַּחֲזוּ אֶת הָאֵלִים וַיִּשְׂתּוּ:
11 And to the nobles of the Children of Israel, He did not send forth his hand – they viewed God, yet they ate and drank.

ספר יחזקאל פרק א

(ז) וְרַגְלֵיהֶם כְּרַגְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַף רַגְלֵיהֶם כְּכַף רַגְלֵי עֵגֶל...
7 "And their feet were straight, and the bottom of their feet were similar to the feet of a calf..."

Chapter 32

17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses: 'There is a noise of war in the camp.'

יז וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶת-קוֹל הָעָם, בֹּרְעֵה; וַיֹּאמֶר, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, קוֹל מִלְחָמָה, בַּמַּחֲנֶה .

18 And he said: 'It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome, but the noise of them that sing do I hear.'

יח וַיֹּאמֶר, אֵין קוֹל עֲנוֹת גְּבוּרָה, וְאֵין קוֹל, עֲנוֹת חַלְוִשָׁה; קוֹל עֲנוֹת, אֲנִי כִי שׁ מִע .

19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mount.

יט וַיְהִי, כַּאֲשֶׁר קָרַב אֶל-הַמַּחֲנֶה, וַיֵּרָא אֶת-הָעֵגֶל, וּמַחֲלֵת; וַיַּחַר-אַף מֹשֶׁה, וַיִּשְׁלַךְ מִיָּדוֹ אֶת-הַלְּחָת, וַיִּשְׁבֵּר אֹתָם, תַּחַת הַהָר .