



Commentary to Torah Portion Ki Tisa

The Sin of the Golden Calf in the Kabbalah of the Ari'zal

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Introduction

We are all familiar with the sin of the golden calf. Yet, what boggles the mind is how could such a grievous sin have occurred?

After all, the people were standing at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Days before they heard G-d Himself speak to them. Days before that they experienced the parting of the Sea. They experienced all the plagues in Egypt and the Exodus. How, in just forty days, after seeing the power of the Divine might, could they ask that an idol be built for them?

Rabbis have answered this question in various ways throughout the centuries. The holy Mekubalim have their answer, and their answer reveals the secrets underlying this horrible event.

As is his way, Rabbi Haim Vital condenses in few words that which he received from his teacher the Ari'zal. Yet, in these few words, we will find mountains and valleys of meaning and depth. The sin of the golden calf is not what it appears to be, as we will now discuss. This following text is from Rabbi Haim's work, Sefer Likutei Torah.

Sefer Likutei Torah (Vilna 68b)

Text *"The secret of the Calf that was made of gold in the image of a bull.*

Commentary The Ari'zal is here telling us that the image of the infant calf is the same as the adult bull. This was the image used in the great sin. Yet, as we shall see, the image of the Bull is not an idolatrous image, it is actually carved into the Throne of Glory as one of the four Faces of the holy Merkava (Divine Chariot), prophetically described in Ezekiel 1. In order to understand this topic we must diverge for a moment in order to understand a small bit about the teachings of astrology and the zodiac. During the period of the Exodus, the astrological sign dominating the epoch was Aries the ram. This is why a lamb, related to the ram was the Paschal sacrifice. This mazal dominated events for 2,000 years, from about the time of Avraham until the time of the destruction of the Second Temple. This was a time of severe judgment, for Aries is ruled by the planet Mars, who rules over blood.

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One point is made very clear by our holy Rabbis - it was the Erev Rav (the mixed multitude who went out of Egypt with Moshe) who instigated the sin of the golden calf. As alleged “former” idolaters, the Erev Rav knew the secret of these astrological epochs. The Erev Rav were not yet cleansed of their idolatrous past. They had not yet elevated to the level of faith that was held by the Benei Yisrael. It was the Erev Rav who thus approached Aharon and demanded from him an “image.”

However, why the image of the calf/bull? The answer is that because this too was an astrological sign, not of the present epoch, but of the previous one. The epoch of Taurus the bull is what preceded the epoch of Aries. According to the astrologers, it was during the epoch of Taurus that Adam first walked the earth. The Erev Rav therefore considered this to be an auspicious sign. Thus, when they chose an image that they wished to represent G-d, they took the image that they thought was the highest and most powerful image. They could not conceive that G-d was above images and astrology. Therefore, they brought down wrath upon all Israel.

Text *Know that [this sin] blemished the Supernal Mother, as recorded in the Zohar [where it says], “they sinned against the Mother.” Therefore, they made the image of the bull, which is the secret of Imma.*

Commentary An image is a mental construct where the mind attempts to grasp and give form to a non-physical reality. Therefore, images are all created in the intellect using the power of thought. The intellectual/thinking function of mind corresponds to the sefirat Binah, which corresponds to the left lobe of the brain and rational, analytical thinking. When constructs of the mind are incorrect, this blemishes the sefirotic source of Mind, which is the sefirat Binah. The sefirotic Face of Binah is called Imma Ila’ah (the Supernal Mother). Therefore, when the Erev Rav made a mistake of the intellect, attempting to portray abstract G-d in a concrete form, this blemished the power and function of Mind/Binah/Imma above.

Text *For the lion is Abba, the bull is Imma, the man is Z.A., and the eagle is Nok, as is known.*

Commentary Here we see how the “images” of the Merkava correspond to the holy sefirot. The first astrological epoch was Taurus, which corresponds to the bull and the sefirat Binah. This teaches us that the universe was created to contain within it the element of intelligence, thus implying the presence of a Creator, one who can be perceived and experienced through thinking and contemplation. The image of the man (Adam) is obviously Z.A. because the holy Name corresponding to Z.A. is MAH, which is numerically 45, the same value as Adam (man). Rabbi Haim says these correlations are “as is known” because this is the pattern outlined in the Zohar and by most other Mekubalim. A fuller discussion of the merkava and its relationship to the camps of Israel is discussed in Parashat Bamidbar.

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Text *However, their mistake was that they knew that Imma [is the one] who gives Mohin and life to Z.A. and that this was the place which Moshe grasped.*

Commentary As it is above, so it is below. The sefirotic Face of Z.A., which radiates and gives light and life to Nok/Malkhut, receives what to give Nok from the Face above Him, which is Imma/Binah. The reception of the supernal lights into Z.A. act as His “brains” (mohin), giving Z.A. the ability to interact with Nok and to provide for Her. Without the influx from Abba (Hokhma) and Imma (Binah), Z.A. lies dormant or asleep. This happens every time that Nok does not offer up Her MahN (mayim nokbin). If mankind sins, then no MahN ascends, thus the power of Z.A. lies dormant, thus the earth suffers from lack of abundance. This sublime level of sefirotic knowledge was widely known in those days. Even the Erev Rav knew of this teaching, although they lacked sufficient holiness to understand it correctly. It is said that this is what Moshe grasped. This means that the power in Moshe’s soul was enough to raise up MahN to cause there to be a union among the sefirot. Moshe, in essence, kept Z.A. aroused and awake.

Text *They [also] knew that when they would sin the inner Mohin would be taken away from Z.A.*

Commentary The sefirot align with one another dependent upon the behavior of mankind. When we ascend MahN then Z.A. aligns with Nok to receive it. Z.A. then raises the MahN and Imma and Abba align with Him to receive it. In return, MahD (masculine waters) returns down the same passage, all in alignment. When, however, human activity, feelings or thoughts do not manifest righteousness, and holiness, then they are cut off from their sefirotic source. As such, the sefirotic “pipe-line” is ruptured. No Divine radiance can then flow below. The Erev Rav knew all too well their own shortcomings and knew that they could never experience the Divine radiance unless they completely repented of their sins, which they were unwilling to do. They thus sought an alternative.

Text *Therefore, they sought to establish a more consistent presence of the Mohin in Z.A. in the lower world. [This is] the Name Elokim.*

Commentary Rather than having to struggle to intermittently receive the full Divine radiance of the Name YKVK, the Erev Rav were willing to accept a lower level of Divine manifestation, one that would be easier for them to control and that would not require of them any great changes of behavior. This level is called “katnut” (smallness) and is represented by the Name Elokim.

This level of Divine manifestation was already in the world, prior to the Exodus, and was known by all, even to Pharaoh. The problem herein is that the entire purpose of the



exodus and the giving of the Torah on Sinai, indeed the entire purpose of creation was to eventually manifest the level of Divine manifestation called “gadlut” (greatness or spiritual adulthood), represented by the Name YKVK. Granted, at this higher level of Divine manifestation, human responsibility is greater, nonetheless so are the rewards. The rewards being the full and final redemption of all mankind and the restoration of our world into the greater spiritual scheme. In essence, the Erev Rav, by making the golden calf were thwarting the entire purpose of creation.

Text *[Thus did they say] “Rise up and make for us Elokim (translated as “a god”).”*

Commentary Herein lies the sin of the golden calf and answers our initial questions as to how such a sin could be performed after witnessing the Hand of G-d perform so many miracles. The people were not asking that an idol be made for them. They knew that the idols of Egypt were worthless. Yet, they also knew that the level of YKVK might be something they could not maintain. Thus, rather than elevate themselves to merit the higher attainment, they were willing to compromise and accept a lower level of Divine manifestation so that they would not have to elevate themselves.

This lack of desire for growth is the inverse and opposite of the purpose of creation. In essence, the sin of the golden calf was not one worshipping some stupid idol; it was idol worship of the worst degree. The idol being worshipped was not the calf; it was what the calf represented. The calf represented the forces of astrology, the forces of merciless destiny. The calf represented the lowest levels of how G-d maintains His universe without the addition of Divine mercy or intervention. The calf represented a breach of the sefirotic unity; a separation of Divine mercy (YKVK) from Divine justice (Elokim). As such the Erev Rav were telling G-d to leave them alone and let them take care of themselves, that they would live in accordance to natural law and that they would have no need for the involvement of the Creator. If this were indeed actualized, Israel would never have been redeemed from Egypt. Thus, the sin of the golden calf shared the brazen spirit of rebellion found earlier in the generation of the Tower of Babel.

The Erev Rav were no stupid fools looking towards an Egyptian idol because Moshe had disappeared. Rather, they took advantage of Moshe’s time on the Mount to attempt to manipulate the Divine flow, to lessen it, so that they could continue and succeed in their sinful ways. In our many sins, nothing has changed through the centuries. The Erev Rav continues to this day to perpetuate the same crimes against G-d and the Jewish people.

Text *Being that they [thus] blemished Z.A., Moshe needed to radiate the 13 rectifications from Arikh Anpin in order for the Mohin to return within Z.A.*

Commentary When such a breach of sefirotic unity occurs, where Tiferet/YKVK is ripped away from Malkhut/Elokim, the only recourse of repair is by the intervention of

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the highest sefirah Keter, referred to as Arikh Anpin (the Long, Full Face of G-d). Keter is the initial passageway through which the Divine radiance flows into the vessels of the sefirot from the unknowable Ayn Sof (the Nothing). Keter is the raw essence of life, sustenance, and mercy. It is the purest form of G-d's light manifest in creation.

When mercy (YKVK, G-d's greater revelation) and severity (Elokim, G-d's lesser revelation) are knocked out of sync, because of the sins of mankind, there are only two way for the balance to be restored. Either balance will be restored through a great show of severity or through a great show of mercy. G-d could have destroyed all the people at that time, and possibly destroyed the entire world. Divine severity is very hard to please and a lot is required.

Divine mercy, on the other hand, is rather high and sublime and very difficult to grasp. Thus, Moshe balanced the two. He called for the immediate deaths of those involved with the golden calf to appease to forces of severity and judgment. He then went back to G-d and offered himself in order to supplicate the highest level of Divine radiance, the ultimate, altruistic mercies of Keter.

Text *Therefore, the 13 attributes were recited here.*

Commentary In the text, immediately following the sin of the golden calf we have the revelation of the 13 attributes of mercy. This is the recitation of the verses, "HaShem, HaShem, (1) G-d [who is], (2) merciful and (3) gracious, (4&5) slow to anger, and (6) abounding in kindness and (7) truth. (8) He preserves kindness (9) for thousands [of generations], (10) bearing [forgiving] iniquity, (11) transgression and (12) sin. (13) He clears [acquits the penitent]." (Ex. 34:6-7).

This expression of G-d's mercy is an expression of G-d's "full Face" Arikh Anpin. So sublime is this level that not even Moshe was able to perceive it all. Thus, G-d told him "no man can see me and live." For if a man were to perceive the fullness of G-d's Divine radiance in the world, he would evolve and ascend and no longer be a man. G-d told Moshe that He would 'cover his eyes" and that Moshe would see the "Back" but not the "Front." The "Back" side of the sefirat Keter is the level of Da'at, which is not a sefirah by itself. It is only the outer (or backside) manifestation of Keter. Moshe's soul emanated from the Da'at, so it was most auspicious and proper for him to achieve this level of Divine revelation.

Text *This is the secret [meaning] of "My Face shall go" meaning that the Face of anger, which is the Name Elokim, shall go,*

Commentary The context of this verse is that after the sin of the golden calf, HaShem said that His Presence (lit. His Face) would not travel within the Jewish camp. Rather His angel would guide them. In other words, this was a lowering of the level of Divine

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radiance that would guide the Jewish people in the wilderness. Moshe pleaded that this would not be the case. Moshe pleaded with HaShem that indeed, they would merit being guided by that level of Divine manifestation known as “G-d’s Presence (i.e., the Face of mercy YKVK) and not merely by an angel (who would only represent the force of severity Elokim). The full verse being referred to reads, “He [HaShem] said, “My Presence [Face] will go and provide you rest.” (Ex. 33:14). The Ari’zal reads the verse, “My Face shall go” to mean that the lower Face of Elokim will go away.

Text *and shall come within Z.A. the YKVK’s of spiritual adulthood.*

Commentary Once the Face of Elokim shall go, and with it Divine wrath, then Z.A. (the spiritual counterpart of Israel above) can be nourished by the power of the Name YKVK, which is the true providence that G-d wishes revealed. Thus, the level of Divine manifestation represented by the Name YKVK is called “gadlut” or spiritual adulthood.

Text *[Then] “I will provide you rest.”*

Commentary It is only being under the influence of the Name YKVK that the Jewish people have any form of true rest. For there is no true rest other than when one is in one’s proper place. The proper (psychological/spiritual) place for the Jewish people is to be under the influence of the holy Name YKVK, which entails G-d’s personal daily interaction with the Jewish people. This entails the manifestation of Divine intervention and the revelation of Divine mercy. All this existed until the sins of the Jewish people caused the destruction of the First Temple built by Shlomo HaMelekh.

When the First Temple was destroyed and the Ark of the Covenant hidden (to this day), the Jewish people again fell victim to the dominance of the Erev Rav, only this time we did not have Moshe Rabbeynu to supplicate for us. Since then the influence of YKVK has been concealed and only the “katnut” (smallness) of Elokim (Divine severity/natural law) is dominant. This will only be rectified with the coming of Mashiah.

Until then, the only way to draw down a semblance of the radiance of the Keter is by our observance of Torah and mitzvot. With every mitzvah that we perform we generate greater light that eventually will break the strangle hold of the Erev Rav. There are many different types of “golden calves” today. We must be extra cautious to guard our minds from modern day idolatries.

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to Aharon and the people; they did not call for the making of an idol, rather they demanded the making of a god with a face, one with a face they had all heard of, possibly knowing well. This G-d is Elokim, the one who created the Heavens and the Earth.

Now, do we not daily proclaim that YKVK, G-d of Sinai and Torah is Elokim? If so, then what is the problem here? To create an image of Elokim would be the same as having YKVK before the people, would it not? What then would be the problem? The solution the Erev Rav offered to the issue of the missing Moses was well thought out. They wanted to replace the supernatural Deity with a natural one, and by doing so, limit the power of how G-d manifests Himself here on Earth. This lesson is not so apparently clear with a mere perusal of the text. We should learn from this that most plots of devious deception are very well thought out, subtle and meant to confuse and deceive.

At the time of Sinai, the peoples of the world were, to a point, spiritually sophisticated. The general consensus was that there was a single Deity who was in charge of all things. This entity, in charge of the pantheon of gods, was called Elokim. Pharaoh even acknowledges Him in his conflict with Moses. What was so shocking about Moshe Rabbeynu's message was that there is a G-d named YKVK who is actually above the Divine "face" of Elokim. This was a concept that the common people both Israelite and Gentile had a real hard time comprehending. They could not comprehend, like we do today, that YKVK is Elokim.

In ancient times everyone believed that there was a Higher Power that controlled the universe. While we refer to that power as Elokim, the ancients referred to it as Nature. They believed that there was a natural order to things and that the natural order was supreme, with nothing greater than it. This concept is also found in Torah in that the Hebrew name Elokim shares the same numerical value with the Hebrew word for Nature, HaTeva. Not for naught does Genesis teach that in the beginning Elokim created the Heavens and the Earth. Elokim is the G-d of creation and thus the Lord and Master of Nature. How can there possibly be any power higher than this?

Then along comes Moshe Rabbeynu and proclaims that there is this invisible, faceless G-d who not only controls Nature but can bend it to His Will arbitrarily, without any concern for the limitations set by natural law. This radical concept flew in the faces of the Egyptians and sounded to them to be pure madness. As we know, the Egyptians and the rest of the world were rudely awakened. In spite of what happened then most of us today do not realize the significance that this revelation had in the ancient world. In order for us to grasp the profundity of the revelation of the existence of this "face" of God known as YKVK we must delve into ancient religious beliefs.

In ancient times, the science of astrology ruled the day. The ancients, since the days before the flood were experts in knowing the courses of the stars and their influences

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upon Earth. The ancients knew that every two thousand years the Earth passes through the influence of one of the astrological signs. Recently, we have entered into the astrological epoch of the sign Aquarius, the water bearer. This is the famous “dawning of the age of Aquarius” made famous by a song of that name back in the 1960’s. It is also a sign of the coming of Mashiah, who bares the “waters of Torah.”

Prior to this, for the previous two thousand years, the sign of Pisces the fish was in ascendant. During this time the Christian Church was the most dominant force on Earth. The original sign of Christendom before they adopted the cross was the sign of the fish. The Greek word for fish, Icthus, had special meaning to the early Christians. Prior to the age of Pisces, the astrological sign of Aries the Ram was in ascent. The period of the Patriarchs, the generations of slavery in Egypt, Moses, the ten plagues and the Exodus all occurred under this sign. What is unknown to many is that while the sign of Aries is today a ram, in those days, the sign was that of a calf, sheep or ram.

The exodus from Egypt took place under the dominant astrological influence of Aries, represented by the sign of a ram, calf or sheep. Pharaoh and the ancient wise men all knew the forces of astrology. They were convinced that these powers were set in place by the Creator and that their influence was unmovable and unshakable. Then along came Moses and revealed that there is a power above the astrological influences and that this power, YKVK, could actually override the astrological influences that control the natural world. Pharaoh could not grasp this concept, but as we know, he was eventually forced to, due to the events that YKVK performed to introduce Himself to human history.

When Moses told Pharaoh that the children of Israel were going out to the wilderness to sacrifice sheep and goats, this angered Pharaoh and Egypt immensely. It was, as if Moses was saying that Israel was sacrificing the gods of Egypt. This was a pretty gutsy thing for Moses to do. Later when Israel sacrificed the Paschal lamb the Egyptians were driven out of their minds with rage, but of course, there was not much they could do against the power of YKVK. Now, we again visit the image of the calf, here at Mt. Sinai with the Golden Calf.

When Moses failed to reappear from on top of the mountain, the Erev Rav (mixed multitude) not being people of pure faith demanded that the people return to the safe and secure knowledge of having a visible god with which they could relate. They therefore chose the logical symbol of the natural power of that present epoch, the astrological symbol of Aries, which in those days was a calf. In their eyes this was not a denial of YKVK but rather a token of respect for YKVK’s handiwork. At least, this is what they proclaimed. They never intended to replace YKVK with a foreign god, but rather they sought to change what YKVK meant and to re-invent Him as being subject to the universe that He created instead of being above it and outside it. This, in essence was the exact same mistake made by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden by choosing

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knowledge over life. Adam, Eve and the Erev Rav chose the tangible over the intangible, the visible over the invisible. By doing this they all brought death to the world.

When we lock G-d up in a box and say that He only does this and His Torah only means that, we have in essence exchanged the Tree of Life for the Tree of Knowledge. We proclaim our knowledge superior to the mysterious and unfathomable workings of the Invisible Creator. This is spiritual arrogance at its heights. This was the sin of Pharaoh and Egypt; this was the sin of the Erev Rav. The sin of the Erev Rav was ever so subtle, to disconnect the Israelite people from YKVK and thus return them into a state of psychological mental slavery.

When the Erev Rav succeeded in their plan, all of Israel became mentally and psychically contaminated. Since the days of Eden, G-d has been directing human history to bring mankind to the point that Israel could serve as His agents to teach the world the truth about YKVK and our true power of liberation from the crushing forces of natural law. YKVK means that we can rise above fate, that we can rise above destiny, that we can set a path before us that is only charted by our faith and the measure of our minds. When the Golden Calf was built, all of this was lost. The people chose to remain in mental slavery rather than maintain liberation. This is why YKVK initially desired to wipe out the entire nation and rebuild it from scratch starting with Moses. If not for the intervention of Moshe Rabbeynu Israel would not have survived as a people.

According to the Torah of the Kabbalah, the results of the sin of the Golden Calf were and still are devastating. Originally Moses was meant to immediately become the Mashiah. The Torah brought down from Sinai originally emanated from the Tree of Life. As such the mitzvot it contained were designed for purified souls. There were no laws of forbidden and permitted and the like, because the souls of the people were being prepared to literally raise above all physical limitations. If not for the sin of the Golden Calf, we would have all been transformed and entered immediately into the Messianic era. The entire course of world history would have been radically different from what it has been. Alas, all this was taken away from us because of a single error. The sin of the Golden Calf enslaved us again, this time in a spiritual Egypt. We have yet to be redeemed from this one.

The sin of the Golden Calf was a subtle mental shift from the unknown to the known, from the unfamiliar to the familiar and from the insecurity of the abstract to the surety of the concrete. In other words because the people sought security in physical things and were not willing to put their absolute faith in Heaven, therefore, they lost everything and certainly did not obtain the security they sought so much. As it was then, so is it today.

Today we still have many Golden Calves. Each time we put our faith into something that we believe will provide for us security and reassurances that life will proceed normally,

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steadily and without too much turmoil, that is our personal Golden Calf. Understand why the people did what they did and you will see that we today are no different. We today still think the same way they did. We are still making the same mistake that they did. We share the same fears and lack of faith. And we continue to ask why Mashiah has not yet come.

The Erev Rav (mixed multitude) of old is also spiritually still among us. In ancient times, they were a separate people, clearly identifiable. Today, however, the Erev Rav is not so physically discernable. Today the Erev Rav is a spiritual element. It is identified as a type or group of souls whose lack of true faith only breeds sorrow and trouble for the Jewish people. The Zohar (1, 25a) goes so far to tell us that the Erev Rav souls have incarnated into the Jewish people and rise to serve as leaders in both the religious and secular communities.

Whenever a religious leader speaks out against the study of the secrets of Torah, the Zohar identifies such a Rabbi as being the Erev Rav. Whenever a religious leader places emphasis on the physical appearances of religious observance and not its inner core, the Zohar identifies such a Rabbi as being the Erev Rav. Whenever a religious leader aggrandizes himself and his followers, giving off an air of superiority and aloofness, the Zohar identifies such a Rabbi as being the Erev Rav. When a religious leader runs after money and power instead of after humility, the Zohar identifies such a Rabbi as being the Erev Rav. When we look around at the problems facing the Jewish religious communities worldwide, we can clearly see that many of our problems are due to many of our so-called leaders being secret and subtle members of the Erev Rav. And we wonder why Mashiah has not yet come.

In the days of Moses, the problem of the Golden Calf was settled in dramatic manner. The Levites went throughout the camp and simply removed everyone who was overtly and flagrantly guilty of such a disgusting compromise. Unfortunately, this cannot be a solution for today. Even if we had a group of righteous and zealous Levites willing to purge the nation of all modern day worshippers of our many Golden Calves, after they finished their job of cleansing, who would be left to serve Heaven and to rebuild the nation?

Our situation today is as serious as it was back then. The story of the Golden Calf is not a lesson in history; it is a revelation about today and a warning for our personal future.

We have to very much seek a solution to the Golden Calves among us today. We have to work diligently to recognize and then identify the Erev Rav amongst us and work as hard as we can to neutralize their ever so subtle influences that are destroying the Jewish religious communities worldwide. I do not need to elaborate further how to indentify guilty members. We each have our own Erev Rav in our individual communities. It is up to us, each one of us must rise up like the Levites of old and root

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out the spirit of the Erev Rav from within ourselves and then from our spheres of influence.

Only a return to the pure and simple faith of Sinai can restore us now. Anyone who keeps building their security and sense of self worth based on things of this world are clearly under the spell of the Erev Rav. You cannot continue to worship your modern Golden Calves and still think you are worshipping HaShem. It did not work in the days of Sinai and it will not work today. Change your attitudes and cleanse yourselves from the Erev Rav within you. Accomplish this and you will then find within yourself the zeal of the Levite to eradicate the Erev Rav and the Golden Calves they embrace, wherever they are to be found. In this way, indeed, we can help bring Mashiah.

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that they could see, and thus relate to. Therefore, they created the Calf, and cried before it, “This is your God, Israel,” meaning the Golden Calf is a visual representation of YHWH.

This intent was not idolatry. It was worse. When God spoke to the people weeks before at Sinai, He imprinted His Torah into their minds and genes. They were supposed to intuitively know, and understand what it meant not to place another god upon YHWH's face. The people's actions in designing the Calf clearly showed that the imprint did not take proper hold.

The collective mind of the people still could not grasp the vital, necessary message that the wholeness of the ultimate, universal God cannot be concentrated into a form or image. YHWH, the Active Being of existence, is so far beyond the concept of any visual image, that no image can do it justice. This is why images are prohibited. The rigid image constricts that which must flow natural and free. This failure of recognition jeopardized the purpose of the entire Sinai event.

As His response to the Golden Calf, YHWH wanted to wipe out the nation, and start from scratch, building upon Moses alone, and his bloodline. Apparently, the imprint took within Moses, so his mind and genes were where YHWH wanted them to be. Rather than accept this course of action, Moses pleaded with God to implement a Plan “B.” And this is exactly what happened.

Moses asked YHWH to show mercy, which is what happened. Although YHWH did not destroy the nation because of this mistake, it became apparent that the revelation of YHWH being the ultimate, universal God, who could not be given any kind of “face,” was a lesson far too deep and profound for the people at that time to internalize. Plan “B” was, therefore, put into effect.

Moses went back up the mountain, stayed there for another forty days (and nights), and coming down on Yom Kippur, brought with him a second set of Commandment Tablets. However, the second set was not absolutely identical to the first. The first Tablets were made entirely by YHWH alone, the second tablets were carved by Moses. Is this significant? What difference does it make who carved the Tablets? Isn't the only thing that matters is what is written on them? Wasn't that the same? The answer to this requires a deeper understanding of the nature of Torah, and insight into YHWH's Plan B.

The Israelites of that time could not handle the profundity of the first Sinaitic revelation, this was clear. To repeat the same thing would have been redundant, and unproductive. If the same intense level of revelation was repeated, another mistake would have inevitably occurred. Plan B involved a coordinated, combined effort of both Moses and YHWH. Moses “carved” the tablets, and YHWH wrote on them. This has been classically

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interpreted to mean that the deep, profound truths of YHWH's Plan A would be concealed in the Torah underneath a superficial facade of subjective, cultural, and ritual laws.

Plan B cloaked the Torah in the language of the people of the time, and enabled them to grasp its message within the context of their present, limited cultural perspective. Originally, the First Tablets spoke of essence, not structure. But the people could not handle essence without structure. Therefore, Plan B, the second Tablets focused on structure, creating the fabric of the 613 commandments in the forms that we have known them since Sinai. This was a necessary step because the people could not conceive of an invisible God, they certainly could not conceive of a Torah without rigid rules and regulations.

The rules and regulations served as a means to an end, to teach and instruct the people how to live their lives striving for higher moral values, and greater refinement of personality and character. This was a gift that YHWH could give the people. The people had to learn these things, and earn their benefits all on their own. This was Plan B, and it would take the nation of Israel on a journey through human history, which has not ended, even too this day.

The Kabbalah offers a very interesting understanding of these events. The Kabbalists teach that YHWH's Plan A was for Moses to serve as the Messiah, and that Israel would then, at that time, spread the universal message of the commandments to the whole world ushering in the messianic era at that time.

The Kabbalists state that the original Tablets contained only the Inner Torah, and none of its present surface level. The original, pure, ultimate Torah was universal, what we today call the Torah of Mashiah. However, this Torah was so sublime that apparently even the Israelites of the day could not fathom its profundity. This is what led them to crave a physical symbol for YHWH in the form of the Golden Calf.

Plan B addressed the Israelites where they were at, psychologically and spiritually at that time. The facade (pshat) of the Torah came about as part of Plan B. It required of the Israelites to learn about the true nature of Heaven by observing rituals and commandments that would, slowly but surely, sink into their minds and consciousnesses. All the laws of dichotomy, the permitted and forbidden, sacred and profane, pure and impure came about because the then present Israelite mindset could not fathom the ultimate Singularity, and unity of all. That message had to be hidden away, and reserved only for those who could handle it (ref. Isaiah 45:7). This is how the Secrets (sod) of the Torah was born. This was the beginning of the original, and only authentic Biblical Kabbalah.

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The secrets of the Torah originally were not meant to be kept secret. Unfortunately, limited and confused human consciousness changed all that. We have been working towards psychological growth and maturity ever since. This is what the commandments, and the religion of Judaism is all about. This is what the Kabbalists call Tikun HaNefesh, the repair of the soul (ref. Sefer Etz Hayim by R. Hayim Vital, Gate 50).

Movement towards the revelation of this great universal truth has been constant. It was the message of the Biblical prophets, and was continued by many of the later Sages of the Mishna and Talmud. Movement towards the restoration of the original revelation of the first set of Tablets is thus Plan B. Plan B is simply the fulfillment of YHWH's Plan A. This is the working towards bringing Mashiah. Anything that perverts the movement towards integration (Tikun) and unity (Yihud) in the great Singularity causes what is called "Perud" (separation), and is considered by the Kabbalists to be an expression of evil.

To think that YHWH would have a Plan A, and a Plan B reveals to us how much potential we human beings have, and it reveals to us the faith that Heaven has in us! After Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, God went into His Plan B for humanity. And now, after the Golden Calf, God went into His Plan B for Israel. There seems to be a pattern here.

God knows what potential we human beings are capable of living up to, and at the same time, He recognizes our weaknesses. God is ready with a plan either way. We human beings can chose either the high road, or the low road. And if we, all too often, chose the low road, then we should not be surprised that the path leads us to struggle up the mountain in a steady incline. After all, the low road, does lead upwards. Our final destination as the human race has already been determined for us. It is ingrained within our genetic makeup. We, therefore, cannot escape it, anymore than we can escape ourselves, which we can't.

Today, most of humanity continues to worship one form of a Golden Calf or another. Many have turned their religions into Golden Calves. Many have even turned Judaism and Torah into Golden Calves. Judaism and Torah get turned into Golden Calves every time the true meaning and intent of the religion gets lost and bogged down under ever more crushing layers of interpretation, and ritual practice, each of which have nothing to do with the original sources of classical Torah.

Essentially, those who cake layer upon layer of new, "stricter" interpretations of Torah, are in fact creating and worshipping a false face of YHWH. By creating a false face for religion, they equally create a false face for God, who is supposed to be found within religion.

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In their quest for religious piety, they have, maybe unknowingly (and maybe not), built for themselves a modern Golden Calf. As it was in the days of Moses, so it is today, and Heaven is not pleased with this misguided endeavor. Maybe it is time for another Heavenly Plan B. Only time can tell.

Today, not many bother to look for, or to listen for the Still Soft Voice that still echoes within us from its inception at Sinai. Instead many seek to find an external voice instead of the inside voice. This is how Golden Calves are made and worshiped. Yes, we have all too many Golden Calves today, and they are far worse than the literal one made in the days of Moses.

We have the Biblical story recorded for us to teach us a psychological lesson. We are meant to learn from the Biblical lesson, extrapolate its message, and apply its teachings to ourselves in every generation. When we fail to do this, we instead build modern Golden Calves.

The people in Moses' day were incapable of understanding their mistake. They proclaimed, and most likely certainly believed, that they were serving YHWH the God of Israel, but alas, they were not. As it was then, so too is it today, regardless of how religious one appears, and proclaims to be.

A Golden Calf is a Golden Calf, even when it is no longer made of gold, or in the image of a calf. Even when it is dressed in a black hat, and long coat, it is still a forbidden image which must be removed before one can again seek to see, and finally discover the true invisible Presence of the Living Being of YHWH.