

A GOLDEN MIXTURE

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

FRIDAY NIGHT:

This Shabbos is Parashas Parah, the third of four special Maftirs that we read before and after Purim. They were chosen to focus on the issues of the day in order to help us take advantage of the spiritual opportunity that presents itself at this particular time of year: Freedom. We are entering Zman Cheiruseinu (the Time of our Freedom).

Parashas Parah is from Chukas in Bamidbar, and is about the Parah Adumah (Red Heifer) used to purify those who had come in contact with a dead body, or an object such as a sword. Tumas Meis (impurity of the dead) is the strongest form of spiritual impurity that one can contract, and renders an individual unfit to take part in the Pesach Offering. However, a sprinkling from special waters that included ashes from the Parah Adumah is the Torah's prescription to cause a person to leave that state.

Thus we read this section in advance of Pesach, even though we cannot perform the service today. Lacking the Temple, we cannot even offer a Korban Pesach. However, as the Talmud states, just verbalizing the procedure at such a time as ours counts on our behalf as if we had actually performed the ritual (Megillah 31b).

Parashas Shemini on the other hand, discusses the inauguration of the Mishkan, which happened to also be on the first day of Nissan, two weeks in advance of Pesach. And, at the height of the ceremony, Aharon HaKohen's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, were killed because they offered an unauthorized incense offering. And therein lies an important connection between the parshah itself and the special Maftir: Rectification for the sin of the golden calf.

Regarding the Red Heifer, Rashi explains that its purpose is to atone for the sin of the golden calf. Let the mother (a heifer) come and clean up for its child (the calf), Rashi explains. It was the golden calf that caused the Jewish people to become mortal once again, re-creating the issue of spiritual impurity from death. Let the Parah Adumah come and provide a means to become pure of that effect.

Regarding the sons of Aharon, Moshe told the Jewish people:

G-d became very angry with Aharon to destroy him; and I prayed for Aharon at that time. (Devarim 9:20)

G-d became very angry with Aharon . . . Because he listened to you . . . to destroy him . . . this denotes the destruction of one's children . . . and I prayed for Aharon at that time . . . and my prayer helped for half so that only two sons died and two remained alive. (Rashi)

Even though Nadav and Avihu committed their own sin, that may have helped to determine which two of Aharon's four sons would die. Not only this, but even though their own sin warranted death from Heaven, it was the golden calf that determined how they died:

Had the Jewish people not sinned with the calf, the zuhama would have been completely removed from them. Had that been the case, even though Nadav and Avihu sinned with the incense, they could have simply died a normal death. However, since Israel did commit the sin with the calf, they caused the zuhama to adhere once again to the Nefesh of Adam. As a result, Nadav and Avihu had to die through burning. This is the reason for, "And all your brothers the entire House of Israel shall cry over the burning" (Vayikra 10:6): their sin of the calf caused the burning of the Nefesh of Adam HaRishon, the "father of the entire world." This is the reason why Nadav and Avihu were considered "equal" to the entire Jewish people, like Moshe and Aharon, because they had possessed the Nefesh of Adam HaRishon. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 33)

Thus, both the parshat itself and the special Maftir have a common thread: Atonement for the golden calf.

SHABBOS DAY:

The entire nation of Israel reached the Tzin desert in the first month. The people camped in Kadesh and that is where Miriam died and was buried. (Bamidbar 20:1)

Following on the heels of the reading of the law of the Parah Adumah is the death of Miriam, decades after the mitzvah of Parah Adumah was given. Thus, the Talmud asks why the two episodes are juxtaposed, and the answer is given:

Rav Ami asked, "Why is the death of Miriam close to Parashas Parah Adumah? To tell you that just as the Parah Adumah atones, so does the death of righteous people atone." (Moed Katan 28a)

Tosfos clarifies and states, like Rashi, that the Parah Adumah atones specifically for the sin of the golden calf. It can be assumed that the death of righteous people atones in general, for whatever sins are plaguing the Jewish people at the time. It would seem as if Nadav and Avihu were the only righteous people to die because of the golden calf, but in reality, that is not true. Everything that goes wrong in history can be traced back to the sin of the EIGEL HAZAHAV (the golden calf).

Let's start with current times. You have to admit that current history is not what we had hoped it would be by this time. True, for the moment it looks as if there is a breakthrough in the Middle-East peace process, but that is only an illusion. The price of that peace is the uprooting of 8,000 Jews, the destruction of years worth of industrial development, and an ever-widening split in the Jewish people. Not to mention increased military vulnerability on the side of the Israelis.

There are also other natives that seem to be getting restless. Russia is moving further away from democracy, while Iran arms itself with nuclear capability. America, England, and the rest of Europe can talk about increased stability in the Middle-East all they want. However, Iran marches to the tune of a different miniret, as does China who is circling Taiwan like a bird of prey, albeit only politically, so far. There are also rumblings in North Korea that cannot be ignored.

There is no question that all of this has been building for years. However, the year that it came out of the closet was in 2001 with the attack on the World Trade Center. That assault changed everything in an extremely conscious way, sending American troops big time onto that far away continent. It also initiated the so-called war against terrorism, a first in history that permitted the American army to take care of unfinished business in Iran, and perhaps even Syria.

If the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, awoke the sleeping giant at that time, it was the attack on the American nation that awoke the sleeping giant once again 60 years later on September 11th. Even George W. Bush, Jr., himself said so.

There were, perhaps, many distinguishing features of that attack, but two of them were the amount of terrorists involved and how long the attack lasted: 19 terrorists who brought down the Twin Towers in 102 minutes. There was supposed to have been 20 terrorists, but for some reason one didn't make it on time. In the end, it took 19 Arab terrorists using box cutters 102 minutes to completely destroy one of America's most important icons of its financial prowess.

Coincidentally, the gematria of eigel (calf) is 103, and of hazahav (the golden) is 19.

Coincidentally, Migdalei HaTeomim (the Twin Towers) is encoded in Parashas Chukas - spanning the section of the Parah Adumah, the death of Miriam, and the episode of Moshe hitting the rock. The names of the terrorists, pilots, and other specific information are also encoded there.

Coincidentally, the table in which HaTeomim (the Twin) is encoded, is a matrix of thirty-six letters, the number that represents the Ohr HaGanuz (the Hidden Light of Creation) - the anti-thesis of the golden calf. It was this light that was drawn down in this week's parshah at the height of the inauguration (Chanukat HaMishkan) just before Nadav and Avihu died on the EIGHTH day.

Coincidentally, about 3,000 people died in the Twin Towers attack, and regarding the golden calf it says:

The people of Levi did as Moshe said killing about three thousand people [involved in the golden calf] that day. (Shemos 32:28)

This is just another place in the Torah where the Twin Towers attack is encoded in the Torah (<http://www.torahcodes.net/alltwin.html>).

Now, if you are coming from the standpoint that Torah is not Divine, or that even if it is from G-d, He did not encode information in such a way, especially about the future, then such information can be

at best coincidental. But, if you are coming from the direction of Sod, then it can only be a Divinely-encoded message to indicate what happened and why, and perhaps more importantly, where things are heading.

Where ARE things heading?

SEUDOS SHLISHIS:

G-d told Moshe, "Go down. Your people which you brought out of Egypt have corrupted themselves." (Shemos 32:7)

It does not say "the people" have corrupted but "your" people: the Erev Rav (Mixed Multitude) whom you accepted on your own as converts without first consulting Me. You thought it was a good thing for converts to be attached to the Shechinah; now they have corrupted themselves and others as well. (Rashi)

Had the Erev Rav not been there, it is clear the golden calf would not have been there either. And if the Erev Rav comes back at the end of history -

Now you can understand the meaning of, "Behold, you shall die with your fathers, and this people will rise up" (Devarim 31:16), which is considered to be one of the verses that has no known [simple] explanation (Yoma 56a). However, it can be explained with the words "rise up" referring to that which comes before and after them [in the posuk], and both explanations are true. For, in the future Moshe himself will reincarnate (i.e., rise up) and return in the last generation, as it says, "you will die with your fathers and rise up." In fact, in the final generation, the Dor HaMidbar (Generation of the Desert) will also reincarnate with the Erev Rav, and this is what the posuk also says, "this people will rise up". . . Thus, the Generation of the Desert along with the Erev Rav reincarnate in the final generation, "like in the days of leaving Egypt" (Michah 7:15). (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 20)

Then why shouldn't the golden calf also come back?

But what does that mean? How does the golden calf come back today?

The only way to answer that question is to understand what the golden calf represented in its essence. As the nations of Biblical times, the people change, but the concept remains the same - always. And, thanks to the Erev Rav, the essence of the eigel hazahav is spelled out in the following posuk:

All the people pulled off the golden earrings from their ears and brought them to Aharon. He took all of it from them and with an engraving tool formed it and made a molten calf. They said, "These are your gods Israel which brought you up out of Egypt!" (Shemos 32:2-4)

However, explains Rashi, what they really meant was, now that Moshe was dead, or so they had thought, the golden calf was to replace him as a source of direction. They had sought to replace

Moshe Rabbeinu, not G-d, which would have been ridiculous at the foot of Mt. Sinai.

This makes sense, for as the Arizal explains, the souls of the Erev Rav came from the same place in the Sefiros as did Moshe Rabbeinu's, except that his was rectified and theirs were not. This is why, explained the Vilna Gaon, the gematria of Erev Rav is equal to that of Da'as (Dalet-Ayin-Tav), the source of the light of their souls. However, that was more of an expression of their potential until their souls were rectified, and until that time they acted as the antithesis of Moshe Rabbeinu.

Thus, the Vilna Gaon revealed:

They are called Erev Rav because they are the heads of the Jews in exile, and therefore, they are called rav. (Likutei HaGR"A)

The golden calf is merely their vehicle to get around, whatever form it may take. It is that which they use to sway the minds of Klal Yisroel from DA'AS Moshe to DA'AS Erev Rav, and it is so fundamental that the Zohar connects them all the way back in time to the first instance. They are also the very source of Haman, that is Amalek.

MELAVE MALKAH:

From the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat. (Bereishis 2:17)

How many different explanations are there for this posuk and the effects of the sin? Here is a novel one:

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil will be thrust from them and shall no longer cling to them or mingle with them, for with respect to Israel it said, "From the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat" (Bereishis 2:17). The tree is the Erev Rav, and G-d told them that through mixing with them they suffered two losses, the first and second temples, as it says, "on the day that you eat from it you will certainly die . . ." (Zohar, 1:26a)

What does the Zohar mean when it equates the Erev Rav with the Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Rah? It means that if you understand the essence of the Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Rah, then you can understand the essence of the Erev Rav as well, and know what to avoid, or what to harness in the direction of G-d. No wonder the Arizal compares the incident of the golden calf with the sin of eating from the Tree, and that the Twin Towers were destroyed in the 83.33-year period of history in the sixth millennium that corresponds to when Adam HaRishon ate from the tree on Day Six.

So what was it about the Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Rah that made it so evil that warranted the punishment of death? The answer is, death itself. In other words, G-d wasn't telling Adam the punishment for disobeying the commandment to not eat, He was warning him about the Tree, and about its capacity to kill a person. Unlike the Aitz HaChaim (Tree of Life) that was like the manna, the Aitz HaDa'as had much good, but also much bad as well.

For, when it comes to something that is completely evil it is easy to notice the enemy, to take regard

of him, and to prepare oneself sufficiently against him. One is, in a sense, safer that way. But when it comes to that which is a mixture of good and evil, and the mixed multitude was a mix of this as well, then it is possible to confuse the enemy for a friend and leave oneself completely indefensible, if not physical then certainly conceptually. It takes a real spiritual and intellectual genius, like Rebi Meir, who can tell the difference between the fruit and the peel so that he can safely enjoy the former while disposing of the latter (Chagigah 15a).

But now that we live in a world that is completely that way, to the point that even the Jewish people are a mixture of good and evil, capable of acting like the Erev Rav. What can be done?

Not a whole lot, except to expose the very aspect of Erev Rav that we might possess on our own, and rid ourselves of it. However, in terms of the big picture, exposing the Erev Rav will be G-d's job, and He does that through the events of history that force us to act one way or the other. And when that time comes, and the destruction of the Twin Towers may have been one of the most powerful signals that it has, a person must be most careful, for he can, through his attitude and Da'as find himself on the wrong side of the line, intermingling with the very group he thought he spent his life trying to avoid.

Then, like the sons of Aharon and the Parah Adumah, he might find himself as part of the atonement for the golden calf, G-d forbid, as opposed to being part of those for whom atonement was done.

Have a great Shabbos,
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Text

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