

TERRORIST THREAT

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

"They made for them selves a molten calf " (Shemot 32, 8)

The incident of the Golden Calf arouses many questions in the minds of all who study the events and all of the characters involved. One question, however, overrides all others. "How is it possible that a people who had witnessed the revelation of Hashem Himself so clearly could commit an act of idol worship?" Additionally, the events of that dark day in our history took place a mere 40 days following the Revelation at Sinai and the Giving of the Torah.

A student once asked a great Rabbi this question and expected to hear an Earth shattering reply. Instead the Rabbi answered:

"Do you have a Yeser Ha Ra - an evil inclination?"

The student slightly puzzled replied, "Yes, I do."

"So do I", was the Rabbi's response, "and so did the people in the desert 3300 years ago. As a matter of fact," he added, "The greater a person is the more powerful is his evil inclination".

Noticing the puzzled look on the young man's face, the elderly sage added, "I know from a verse in Tehillim. David Hamelekh describes Hashem's relationship with our ancestors as one of constant conflict. "Forty years I battled the generation; then I said 'They are an errant-heart people, they know not my ways.' Tehillim 95,8 They certainly had to have an evil inclination"

The point the Rabbi was trying to convey is that many people forget that they have an evil inclination. In fact, were one to ask the man on the street he may reply, "No - I don't have one". Those who spend a lot of time in shul or working for institutions that do good for the community at large also are prey for this trap. More so, those who sit in Yeshivah studying Torah many hours per day may feel they have already won this key battle with sin.

The Baal Shem Tov whispered a verse minutes before he died and a student bent over to listen. "Let not the foot of the arrogant come to me; and let not the hand of the wicked move me". [Tehillim 36,12] The student inquired, 'Rebbe, why are you reciting this now?'

Answered the Hassidic master; "Even here the Satan wants to trip me by getting me to become haughty with my life's accomplishments".

One should never become complacent with spiritual growth. There is always a battle raging

between one's good common sense and desire to do the will of Hashem and the wiles of one's evil inclination attempting to bring about a fall from the highest peak to the lowest valley. One who does not sense the terrorist threat has already lost the battle. Stay alert and keep pushing higher. He never sleeps on the job and never should you.

Shabbat Shalom

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