

“They shall make a Sanctuary for Me, so that I shall dwell among them.” (25:8)

Sforno comments that the sin of the *eigel ha'zahav*, the Golden Calf, catalyzed Hashem's "decision" to have the *Mishkan*, Sanctuary, built. The spiritual disease that infected *Klal Yisrael* caused the people to act in a manner which bespeaks moral and spiritual depravity. Prior to their sin, they had been able to worship Hashem wholeheartedly from anywhere. He would dwell in their midst, despite the lack of a fixed place of worship. The *Shechinah* was all over, as it says in *Shemos* 20:21, "*In every place where My Name is mentioned, I shall come to you and bless you.*" The Altar consisted of "*adamah*", earth. There was no need at that stage to employ the medium of gold, silver and precious stones to "attract" the Divine Presence. Of His own accord, Hashem sought to be with His children whenever and wherever this simple Altar of earth was erected.

As a result of the Golden Calf, the manifestation of Hashem's Presence was restricted to the Sanctuary that *Klal Yisrael* was to build. From this point on, everything was to be formalized, fixed and limited in regard to man's relationship with *Hashem*. The manner of worship, the place and time was to change. All of the conventional expressions that people esteemed – silver, gold, precious stones –were now required for the building of *Hashem's* Sanctuary. The utopian state of holiness being manifest everywhere, a nation rejoicing with Hashem wherever they desired, had been rejected by the people during their Golden Calf rebellion. They had traded idyllic holiness for a Golden Calf.

The general spiritual decline of *Klal Yisrael* carried the consequence of restricting the scope of spiritual life. When people shun what is free, they are ultimately compelled to seek the same commodity under pressure. When a nation is insensitive to Hashem's Presence, they are forced to receive it in a restricted state, in a limited place, within the walls of the Sanctuary.

In the *Madreigas Adam*, the *Alter, z.l., m'Novardik* explains that this restriction occurred with the cessation of *Nevius*, prophetic power, in *Klal Yisrael*. As this source of knowledge and guidance was quelled, new sources of wisdom, the *Yeshivos* of Sura and Pumbedisa and others like them, became the local centers of Jewish life. They became the focal points where every Jew was to turn for direction. The *Rosh HaYeshivah* became the universally recognized authority for the word of G-d. The will of G-d was manifest through the *gedolei ha'dor*, *Torah* luminaries of each generation. The *Rosh HaYeshivah* was regarded as the living embodiment of the *Torah*. His word was sacrosanct; his decision undisputed; his integrity never impugned; his leadership never questioned.

Horav Mordechai Miller, z.l., comments that in contemporary society things have changed radically. The relationship between the *Rosh HaYeshivah* and the people is no longer an equal one. They no longer share the same goals and aspirations. The people have strayed. They have exchanged their

loyalties from Hashem to the Golden Calf of materialism. It is at times such as these that those who adhere strongly to the true word of G-d – who still recognize the difference between the spiritual and the material – to concentrate their forces, to position themselves behind an invisible line, marking the boundary between themselves and the rest of the world. To form too close a tie with those who reject and vilify spiritual values, who denigrate a life of *Torah* and *mitzvos*, carries with it the serious threat of having one's own values diluted, his moral fortitude diffused and his spiritual integrity impugned. In a world hostile to *Torah* and its adherents, one must retrench his forces as he constricts his spiritual expression. The *Mishkan*, Sanctuary, is the place from which Hashem's Presence radiates throughout the world. This is true of any *makom Torah*, place where *Torah* is studied and reigns supreme. This place becomes a mini *Mishkan*, a microcosm of the Sanctuary, where the *Torah* shines forth, inspiring a world.