

**"And Hashem spoke to Moshe... go descend, for your people have become corrupt... they made for themselves a Golden Calf... and Hashem said to Moshe: I have seen these people and behold they are a stubborn people... and now leave Me be and let Me vent My anger and annihilate them."  
(32:7,8,9,10)**

The *Torah* lists the sins transgressed by *Bnei Yisrael*. They corrupted themselves, and they made a Golden Calf. They replaced service to a Divine G-d with the worship of a molten image. Hashem did not choose to destroy them, however, for these sins. Only after they are described as an obstinate people does Hashem seek to decimate them. *Horav Meir Chadash, z.l.*, notes that stubbornness is an evil which must be totally eradicated. Obstinacy, by its very nature, is the antithesis of free will. One who doggedly refuses to accept guidance and reproach, who continues upon his chosen path of evil even in defiance of punishment, is a person who is obsessed with performing evil. He is powerless to act by the dictates of his own conscience. Such a person cannot rationally choose between right and wrong. Therefore, he is unable to repent his ways.

A necessary prerequisite for *teshuvah*, repentance, is recognition of a misdeed. There is a natural inclination to deny one's own wrongdoing. When one justifies his negative actions, he is preventing himself from pursuing the road to *teshuvah*. Indeed, the more we legitimize our wrongdoing, the more we are likely to believe that what we are doing is right, perhaps even meritorious.

*Klal Yisrael* are referred to as "*a stiff necked people*." This description is intrinsically a blessing in disguise. Being "stiff necked," we have been able to muster the moral courage to stalwartly maintain our faith in Hashem. Despite the pain, sorrow, and suffering which have accompanied us throughout history, we have held our heads high. To misinterpret the blessing of "resolve and determination" as "stubbornness," a trait which promotes evil, is reprehensible. This type of repulsive behavior enabled the people to participate in the progressive sin of the Golden Calf and resulted in Hashem's tragic decree.