

## **And (they) fashioned it into a molten calf. (32:4)**

Aharon *HaKohen* knew that Moshe *Rabbeinu* would return at the designated time. The people were impatient, thinking that their leader was not returning. To stall for time, Aharon instructed them to bring their gold, which he, in turn, threw into the fire. The Egyptian sorcerers, included amongst the *eirav rav*, mixed multitude, who joined the Jewish People when they left Egypt, employed their knowledge of the occult to create the calf. The *Talmud Sotah* 13a says that an amulet with the letters *ali shor*, “rise up ox,” engraved on it was in the possession of the Jewish People. Moshe had used this amulet to retrieve Yosef’s coffin from within the waters of the Nile River. It was this amulet which they flung in the fire, that caused a calf of gold to emerge. The question that presents itself is quite simple: If the amulet’s lettering consisted of “rise up ox,” why did a calf materialize? If the amulet did the trick, then a golden ox should have appeared. Alternatively, since Moshe had caused a man to emerge, the molten gold should have produced a human being – not an animal. Furthermore, after seeing how they had created a molten idol, how could the people declare *Eileh elohecha Yisrael*, “These are your g-ds, *Yisrael!*” Clearly, they must have understood that this molten image had no Divine powers.

**Horav David Chanania Pinto, Shlita**, quotes his son, *Rav* Rephael, who gives a practical analysis to explain why the image that emerged from the fire was a calf – not an ox. Hashem took pity on the *kavod*, esteem, of Yosef *HaTzaddik*. Imagine if an ox – not calf -- would have emerged from the fire. The ox is the symbol of Yosef. In short, the ‘*Shor*’ *HaZahav*, “Golden Ox” would have been called Yosef *HaTzaddik!* Out of respect for the saintly Yosef, Hashem arranged for a calf to materialize. This idea applies as well to explain why a man was not created. He would instantly have been given a name.

*Rav* David applies this logic to explain why the people, upon seeing the Golden Calf, immediately began to chant, “These are your gods, *Yisrael.*” It was the *eirav rav* who made this declaration – which was true. The Golden Calf was not their creation. It was the creation of the Jews. The *eirav rav* would have produced an ox or a man. A calf most certainly was not their intention.

*Rav* David quotes the **Be’er Mechokeik** who writes: “There are times when a person is unaware of what is going on within himself. An entire inner revolution is taking place – and he has no idea why it is happening. He is filled with tension and is quite uptight. Indeed, when the eruption occurs, he has no idea that something is happening within him. He is still only at the *saf ha’hakarah*, threshold of consciousness. We refuse – or are afraid to delve deeper – to penetrate the depths of our psyche to understand what is taking place.

This is what took place concerning the Jewish people. They wanted an ox, and a calf emerged. Now what? Did they allow themselves a moment to think, to question this turn of events? What is happening here? We were supposed to get an ox – not a calf. Something out of the ordinary is occurring. We must stop to digest what is happening. That would have been the proper course to take. This is the approach that one who is not driven by passion would have taken. What did they

do? They immediately declared, "These are your gods, Yisrael!" Why? Because they could not deal with decision-making. They were afraid to confront their own issues. They knew something was amiss, but they were not prepared to respond to the problem. An intelligent reaction – in which they would think about what was happening, and perhaps discover its hidden meaning and message – was too much for them. They reacted immediately, closed the book – so to speak – and made their decision.

We make up our minds too quickly. We hear a *shmuess*, ethical discourse, a powerful, emotion-filled lecture. We are impressed, even moved, but before we allow ourselves to think about its personal message, we conclude that it is not for us. The speaker does not mean us, he is referring to someone else. Close the book; move on. If we allow ourselves the luxury of thinking, we will realize that everything has relevance. The message is not exclusive. It is general. Whoever is willing to listen can better himself. Some of us are either too frightened or too arrogant – to accept the fact that it might also concern us.