

"These are the accounts of the Mishkan." (38:21)

The Midrash makes an interesting statement with regard to the word vkt, "these". Hashem said to Klal Yisrael, "With the word vkt you sinned against Me, when you proclaimed "lhvkt vkt ktrah, these are your god(s), Yisrael"; with vkt you will offer penance and I will forgive you." Chazal infer that the Mishkan serves as an atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf, the incident in which Klal Yisrael deviated from worship of Hashem and embraced the eigel. Chazal's statement implies that the core of the sin of the Golden Calf lay in the words, "These are your gods." How are we to understand the sin and its atonement?

Horav Ze'ev Weinberger, Shlita, makes the following observation. The Jews who embraced the Golden Calf did so in an attempt to concretize Hashem's image. As they sang in the Shirah at the parting of the Red Sea, "This is my G-d." They were alluding to a superior image of Hashem to the extent that they "pointed" to His glory with a finger and perceived Hashem's Divine Revelation.

Bnei Yisrael yearned again for this experience. They desired a means by which to express their spiritual dimension. They sought corporeality in an area which should remain ethereal.

Their desire to transform the spiritual into the material symbolized the antithesis of Torah doctrine. Consequently, the most appropriate manner by which to achieve atonement was to do the opposite; to create an edifice composed of the finest materials whose purpose would be entirely spiritual. By taking the mundane and elevating it to a higher spiritual plane, by building the Mishkan, they achieved penance for their previous transgression.