

And Moshe spoke to Aharon: Approach the Altar and offer your (korban) Chatas and your (korban) Olah. (9:7)

Chazal explain why it was necessary for Moshe to speak emphatically to Aharon saying, "Approach the *Mizbayach*." Aharon was "shy," afraid to approach the *Mizbayach*. He saw the likeness of an ox with its horns in the *Mizbayach*, and he was afraid. Moshe told him, "Take courage and approach the *Mizbayach*." Aharon was anxious, reflecting a fear that ought to take hold of any conscientious leader who assumes his position. He understood the heavy responsibility of his position and the lofty mission of being leader, teacher, and interpreter of *d'var Hashem*.

His fear, however, had an additional aspect. The image of an ox brought back memories of the fateful day upon which the Golden Calf was made. As **Horav Shlomo Breuer, zl**, comments, Aharon knew only too well the effect of an offense which a *Torah* leader commits. Regrettably, he experienced the tragic results of an error which one who stands at the forefront of *Klal Yisrael* commits. While a leader's positive actions may not necessarily inspire widespread enthusiasm, his weakness, his deference to overwhelming pressure, can have tragic repercussions. Aharon knew experientially the sad outcome of his misinterpreted action concerning the Golden Calf. **Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl**, explains Aharon's reason for making a calf: Aharon sought to channel the people's rebellion into an innocuous outlet. The people clamored for a leader. Initially, they said they were seeking a replacement for Moshe *Rabbeinu*; in truth they wanted a new divinity. In order to confine the rebellion, Aharon selected a member of the calf family. In the vernacular of sacrifice, the calf represents servitude as opposed to mastery. It would serve as an insignificant outlet for the people's insurrection. By selecting the weak, subordinate calf, over the strong, more independent ox, Aharon sought to downplay the people's rebellion.

The people did not accept the *eigel*, calf, as Aharon had intended. They danced before it and bowed to it, as if it were a G-d. They transformed the *eigel* into a *shor*, ox. They took what was intended as an illusion of divine intermediary and transformed it into Divinity. The *shor* represented full-fledged idolatry. The nation that Hashem had selected to be His People, the nation that had achieved nobility, abdicated its achievements for a *shor*--a new god.

Aharon brought two sacrifices when he assumed office as *Kohen Gadol*--a *shor* and an *eigel*. He was required to bring both of these animals as an act of atonement so that he would confront the devastation that can result when one accepts any concession in the representation of the Divine truth--the *eigel* turns into a *shor*!

Is it any wonder that Aharon was overcome with anxiety and humility as he approached the *Mizbayach*? As *Horav Breuer* so beautifully puts it: Aharon's appearance before the *Mizbayach*, the central site of his new duties, vividly recalled for him the darkest hour of his past. In the Altar he saw the shape of an ox, implying the heavy burden and awesome responsibility of *Torah* leadership. Moshe asked him, "My brother, why do you fear? It is the specific fact that you are

nervous; your very reticence bespeaks your fitness for the position. Only a leader who fears the results of error, who places before himself the overwhelming responsibility of his position, is qualified to lead. This is probably true in every area of endeavor. One who does not fear the result of his error should not be in a position of leadership. True success is achieved when one has the ability to acknowledge and confront error.