

Remember, do not forget that you provoked Hashem, your G-d, in the wilderness... You have been rebels against Hashem. (9:7)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* lists some of the indiscretions and unacceptable behavior of *Klal Yisrael* during their wilderness journey. They are enjoined to remember, to never lose sight of these infractions. Their past sinful behavior must be expunged from their characters, lest it return to haunt them later. The only way to prevent recurrent problems is to ingrain in one's mind the past, their deficiencies, and how they acted. Remembering the sin of the Golden Calf is on top of the list of iniquitous behavior which led to open rebellion. Thus, it is included among the *Sheish Zechiros*, Six Remembrances, incumbent upon us to remember and recite daily. Included is the exhortation to remember *Shabbos*, the Revelation at Sinai and the liberation from Egypt. Understandably, we can derive powerful lessons from these seminal events and *mitzvos*, but what do we derive from reiterating the sin of the Golden Calf? What is the future benefit of recapitulating our rebellion?

Horav Simchah Zissel Broida, zl (Rosh Yeshivas Chevron), offers a noteworthy insight which opens a new vista for understanding sin and sinners. He begins by questioning the inclusion of the words, *im Hashem*, with/against Hashem. He explains that it is specifically concerning those who serve Hashem, who are observant and dedicated to Him, who want to do whatever they can to glorify Him – even at the expense of taking their own initiative – that we wonder about their true motives. Ironically, the intense desire to serve Hashem at all expense can cause a person to get carried away and act in an unseemingly manner.

This was *Klal Yisrael's* sin pertaining to the Golden Calf. They sought a new approach toward serving Hashem. They refused to wait, or they did not believe that Moshe *Rabbeinu* was returning. Perhaps they meant well. We, are, however, are a nation of discipline, a nation of obedience. We do not act on our own volition. We wait to be commanded. If the command does not come, we continue waiting.

The *mekoshesh eitzim*, who gathered sticks on *Shabbos* in a public desecration of *Shabbos*, acted *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven. He thoughtlessly, on his own, decided to teach the nation a lesson: one who desecrates *Shabbos* is liable for the death penalty. Had he not acted on his own, our entire history would have been altered. Had all of *Klal Yisrael* observed two *Shabbosos*, no nation could ever persecute us. We would be on top of the world, impenetrable. The *tzaddik* who wanted to convey a lesson desecrated the second *Shabbos*. His initiative has cost us dearly. This is the meaning of *marim im Hashem*, to rebel with Hashem, to act foolishly on our own for Hashem, without direction and without guidance. We can aptly interpret the closing prayer of *Tachanun*, *Azreinu Elokai yisheinu... v'hatzileinu v'chapeir al chataseinu l'maan Shemecha*, "Assist us, O G-d of our salvation... rescue us and atone for our sins for Your sake." What sins are committed for "Your sake"? *Horav Yitzchak Pinchas Goldwasser* explains that it refers to sins which are carried out in our service of Hashem. We think that we are acting appropriately, even

laudably, but, in reality, we are guilty of sin. It is for such infractions that we need Heavenly atonement, since we are unaware of where we went wrong.

Horav Leib (Todros) Levin, zl, was a talmid muvhak, primary student, of the Maharil Diskin, zl. Horav Yehoshua Leib (Diskin) was the leader of the chareidi community in Yerushalayim/Old City. Very exacting in his service of Hashem, he did not brook any alterations in his service. When the Maharil Diskin was niftar, passed away, Rav Leib would no longer engage in any activity that smacked of kanaus, zealotry, (such as public protest of flagrant Shabbos desecration. The Maharil had been a kanai and, as such, was the barometer of what was appropriate and what was not really kanaus. Rav Todros felt that once his saintly Rebbe was no longer present to guide him, he could not with integrity act as a zealot. He feared acting indecorously, thus creating a chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name.

Alternatively, *Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, explains the meaning of im Hashem based upon Midrash Tanchuma (Shemos 25) which teaches that, on the day that the nation made the Golden Calf, manna (still) descended from Heaven. They took this Heavenly manna, a gift from Hashem, and offered it as a korban, offering/sacrifice, to the Golden Calf. This is what is meant by "with Hashem." Even on the day that the nation audaciously rebelled against the Almighty, He still did not halt their Heavenly food. Hashem's chesed, kindness, to us is not necessarily hindered by our lack of fidelity to Him. How did we demonstrate our gratitude to Him? We brought this food to the Golden Calf! Despite the fact that im Hashem, the Almighty is with us, and supports us, we act insubordinately, magnifying our sin. Is it any different than using our G-d-given talents improperly? We do not act with malice; we are just not thinking. This is why Hashem gave us a brain: to think.*