

## These are the reckonings of the Mishkan – the Mishkan Ha'Edus (Testimony). (38:21)

*Rashi* comments that, since Hashem's Presence was upon the *Mishkan*, it attested to the fact that He had forgiven the sin of the Golden Calf. (Otherwise, why would the Divine Presence be connected with the *Mishkan*?) It would appear from *Rashi* that the purpose of the *Mishkan* was as testimony to the world that Hashem had forgiven *Klal Yisrael's* sin. In *Parashas Terumah*, however, the stated reason for the *Mishkan* is *hashroas HaShechinah*, the Divine Presence resting among us. We sinned – repented and were (to an extent) forgiven. The fact that the *Mishkan* is among us is proof that Hashem has forgiven our participation in the sin of the Golden Calf, although we cannot say that we have the *Mishkan* because Hashem forgave us. It is merely an indicator. The purpose of the *Mishkan* has nothing to do with forgiveness.

Furthermore, why is it necessary to underscore Hashem's forgiveness? We sinned – we repented – Hashem forgave us. This is the way the process goes. Was there something different about the Golden Calf that would preclude/override *teshuvah*? Can we derive a lesson from the fact that Hashem accepted our *teshuvah*?

*Horav Shmuel Birnbaum, zl*, explains that, when Moshe *Rabbeinu* asked Hashem to mitigate the sin, he said, *Lamah Hashem yechehah Apcha b'Amecha*, “Why, Hashem should Your anger flame up against Your people?” (*Shemos* 32:11). *Rashi* comments: “Does a wise man become jealous of someone other than he who is wise? Does a strong man envy anyone other than he who is strong?” In other words, “Hashem, the people did not create a competition to You. It was a molten idol – a nothing. Why would You become so angry?” It seems that Moshe was attempting to mitigate the sin because, after all, the Jews had “exchanged” their allegiance to Hashem for an idol that was nothing and represented even less. Does that make the sin less sinful? I would think it makes the nation look worse. Last, why should the entire nation receive one collective punishment? Those whose sin was greater should receive a commensurate punishment; while those whose sin was not as glaring should receive a more limited punishment. Why wipe out the entire nation?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that *avodah zarah*, idol worship, is unlike any other sin. To *chas v'shalom*, Heaven forbid, exchange Hashem for another self-created entity is an unpardonable sin. A perfect example would be: A woman is able to shore up the necessary fortitude to tolerate substantial suffering and pain. She draws the line, however, when her husband brings a *tzarah*, co-wife/second wife, into the home. This is an unforgivable outrage. What greater affront can the people manifest towards Hashem than to forsake Him for some senseless, contrived idol? Can we demonstrate a greater *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's Name?

Having said this, we can understand how Moshe sought to mitigate their sin by asserting that a wise man is envious of a competitor. A wise man is not jealous of a fool; a puny man does not

threaten a strong man. Veritably, the Jews perpetrated an egregious act of rebellion, but look at for whom/what they eschewed Hashem – for a self-created molten calf. This was an act of utter stupidity, reflecting neither emotional nor cognitive intelligence. Indeed, they lost it; under such circumstances, Moshe posited, their disgrace and desecration constituted an act of self-abasement more than anything else. Thus, they should warrant a second chance – an opportunity to repent and once again return to Hashem's "good graces." Their sin should be ameliorated and treated as the type of infraction for which repentance would be acceptable.

Nonetheless, adds the *Rosh Yeshivah*, while this might provide some sort of vindication for the nation's behavior – it does not ameliorate the sin. *Avodah zarah* is a sin which causes a *chillul Hashem* – a sin for which penance consists of death. Until the sinner dies, he is not pardoned of his sin. One caveat, however, may reduce the requisite for punishment not ameliorated by *teshuvah: Kiddush Shem Shomayim*. This was the purpose of the *Mishkan*: to sanctify Hashem's Name publicly for the whole world to see. *V'Shachanti b'socham*, "I will rest among them." The *Mishkan* cleansed, elevated and sanctified the spiritual taint that the Golden Calf had created. The root of *avodah zarah* is distancing oneself from Hashem. By virtue of their sanctifying Hashem's Name, *Bnei Yisrael* created a return to being close with Him once again.