

THE SAITSKIY FAMILY EDITION



THIS WEEK'S EDITION IS DEDICATED BY MR. TUVYA SHESTAKOV L'ILUI NISHMAS AVIVA BAS NECHAMA, NINA BAS NECHAMA, AND NECHAMA BAS SHLOMO ELYA

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PARSHAS KI SISA EDITION – VOLUME 15, ISSUE 9 – ADAR 16, 5785/MARCH 15TH, 2025

TORAH QUESTION OF THE WEEK BY RAV MOSHE KLEIN: KI SISA – THE INSIDE STORY ABOUT THE GOLDEN CALF

Last week's question: Was the cheit (sin) of the Eigel Hazahav (Golden Calf), including Aharon HaKohen's involvement, considered actual Avodah Zarah (idol-worship), or was there a different dimension to their sin? What exactly was their mistake, and how is it understood Hashkafically?

Answer: When we speak about the Eigel, the event is more complicated than the average layman understands it to be. The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 4b) writes that the purpose of the Eigel was "*Lehoros teshuva Larabim*" (Avodah Zarah 4b), the concept of communal repentance. **Rashi** says that if a person claims their Teshuvah won't be accepted, he will be told to learn from the Eigel incident to know it's possible to return even from "idol-worship". In truth, the Jews were strong people who had complete control over their desires. This sin was facilitated by Hashem Himself.

Furthermore, Rashi (Shemos 32:4) brings down that the *eiruv rav* (mixed multitude who followed the Jews out of Egypt) who had come up from Egypt were the ones who gathered against Aharon, and they were the ones who made the calf. Afterward, they caused the Jews to stray after it (see Midrash Tanchuma 19). So, the Jews didn't initiate it; rather they fell for the trap of the *eiruv rav* magicians creating this "idol" and enticing us to worship it. Let's discuss three ideas from the **Ramban**, the **Ohr Hachaim**, and the **Beis Halevi**.

The Ramban explains that no fool in the world would actually believe that the gold in their ears would turn into god. Rather, it was a power that was in the form of the gold. He explains that the Jews never meant to make a god to have independent power which would give them life in this world or the next. They totally believed in Hashem and that He took them out of Mitzrayim. All they wanted was another Moshe who led them out of Egypt, and now that he wasn't there anymore, they sought to find a replacement for him.

This is what is meant by the Pasuk (ibid 32:1) "*Come, make us a god who shall go before us, for Moshe - the man who brought us from the land of Egypt - we do not know what has happened to him.*" Furthermore, the Ramban adds that when Moshe came back, they ran away from it, and when Moshe burned it, they were okay with it.



"Yes, I robbed the bank — but I had the best of intentions!"

If it was an actual god, they would not have allowed it to be burned. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 63a) says that the Jews desired many gods. As a footnote, the Ramban explains that they weren't sure how to manifest some type of spiritual power to have a leader. In short, they needed a wanted a leader like Moshe, so they tried to get some type of power from Hashem's traits and place it onto this Eigel.

This might be a tad deep, but the Ramban writes that Aharon himself though that in the desolate desert the Jews were in, where *Midas Hadin* (strict justice) ruled, they needed to have that power from Hashem to direct them. In the depiction of the *Ma'aaseh Merchavah* (Yechezkel 1:10) that the face of an ox to their left, and so is Middas Hadin. That's why the Eigel was made: to lead the Jewish nation.

The Ohr Hachaim expresses a similar idea. The Jews didn't want a separate god; they wanted an intermediary to lead them, as they sought to extrapolate some G-dliness from Hashem to manifest it onto an animal. He calls it a "high power", and wherever it manifested itself it's like the G-dliness would help them carry on and protect them from danger. If not for the medium, he writes, Hashem would not be watching over them and forget them.

Therefore, they sought to find an in-between conduit to have the connection to Hashem. This would take the role of Moshe. We see from both the Ramban and the Ohr Hachaim that their intention had nothing to do with Avodah Zarah.





The Beis Halevi relates a different but profound idea. He explains that the Mishkan was a place that brought the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) into this world. Therefore, every single part of the Mishkan was precisely measured with Kabbalistic considerations, from the garment manufacture to how all the parts were put together. All this was for the *Shechinah* to manifest itself.

Now that Moshe was absent, and they believed he was not coming back - and thus the Mishkan project was suspended - they tried by themselves with their knowledge to channel the *Shechinah* and bring it into our midst through another means. Certainly, they had (or felt they had) a great deal of esoteric knowledge and Kabbalistic ideas of how the Mishkan operates. All they wanted was to have Hashem with them, so they made the Eigel.

What was their mistake if they were looking for Hashem's Presence? The Beis Halevi writes that they only erred in one way. Hashem did not command them. One may know all the deep knowledge and secrets of Creation (the Zohar and Sefer Yetzirah), but if Hashem didn't instruct them to do these things, then one shouldn't do them. All the calculations don't matter if the Hashem doesn't give the green light.

This week's question: At the start of the Parsha, Moshe tells the Jews to work for six days and the seventh day is Shabbos. The question is: what does this have to do with the Building of the Mishkan (Tabernacle)? Is there some sort of connection between the two?

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KI SISA – POWERFUL MARRIAGE LESSONS FROM THE KETORES/INCENSE

In this Parsha, we are given the recipe and instructions for the Ketores/incense (Shemos 30:34-36): The Ketores holds many valuable lessons that we can take to heart and apply to strengthen our Shalom Bayis. Here are just a few. **Rashi**, commenting on the words "*with pure frankincense*," teaches that our Rabbis derived from this Pasuk that eleven spices were given to Moshe Rabbeinu at Har Sinai. Each spice contributed its own distinct fragrance, and when blended, they created a rich and exquisite aroma. The absence of even a single ingredient caused the Ketores to be invalid.

This concept provides a powerful insight into marriage. Just as every ingredient in the Ketores was needed, every aspect of our spouse's personality is designed by Hashem to complement us. No trait is accidental; our spouse was created perfectly to help us grow in the way Hashem intends. Similarly, just as the Ketores required precise measurements, our homes are filled with the exact balance of challenges and opportunities for growth. When we choose to view our spouse with appreciation and love, rather than with frustration or impatience, we bring the lesson of the Ketores into our homes.

Another lesson from the Ketores is its far-reaching effect. The Gemara (Tamid 3:8) states that the fragrance of the Ketores was so powerful that it could be smelled all the way to Yericho! This teaches us that Shalom Bayis is not just a private matter - it impacts everyone around us. The difference between a child raised in a home filled with warmth and harmony versus one raised in an environment of *machlokes* – strife and discord (lo aleinu) - is immeasurable.

A home filled with Shalom creates an atmosphere that nurtures growth, stability, and success, setting the foundation for future generations. The word *Ketores* hints at the ingredients needed for a strong and peaceful home (Midrash Tanchuma, Tetzaveh 14): **Kuf** stands for *Kedusha* (Holiness). **Tes** stands for *Tahara* (Purity). **Reish** stands for *Rachamim* (Compassion). **Tav** stands for *Tikvah* (Hope).

This is the perfect formula for Shalom Bayis. When we **prioritize holiness** over material pursuits and recognize that our homes are a place of *Kedusha*, we strengthen our marriages with spiritual depth. When we **uphold purity** instead of chasing the latest trends, we build an environment where values and sincerity flourish. When we look **at our spouse and children with compassion** rather than with a critical eye, we create an atmosphere of warmth and understanding.

Building a home of Shalom Bayis is not always easy. It requires patience, effort, and dedication. There are days when frustration may cloud our vision and moments when we might struggle to see the good in our spouse. But just as the Ketores required careful preparation and precise blending to achieve its perfect fragrance, a peaceful home is built through an understanding that our spouse has all the perfect ingredients to make us grow closer to each other and Hashem. This is a tall order and in no way an easy feat, but the dividends are worth the effort. May Hashem bless us with the light of Shalom Bayis!

Rabbi Greenfield, MS MFT, is the author of the Torah marriage toolbox course. Create more Shalom Bayis in your home by visiting Torahmarriage.com or email rabbigreenfield@gmail.com

**This article is dedicated by Reb Eli Wiesel L'ilui Nishmas
Binyamin Baruch Ben Ephraim Halevi**

KI SISA – A JEWISH HERO

As we spoke about last week, after the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe Rabbeinu confronts in dramatic fashion, Hashem and defends the Jewish people (Shemos 32:32), “Now, if You will forgive their sin [well and good]; but if not, erase me from the record which You have written!” That’s why last week, in Parshas Tetzaveh, Moshe’s name was erased because part of it came true. Even though Hashem forgave them, it shows that everything a *Tzaddik* (righteous person) says has an impact. In general, we all must be careful with what we say.

There is an interesting addendum (or epilogue) to the story. When Moshe comes down from the mountain with the second Luchos, Moshe’s face features *Karnei Ohr* – the skin of his face had become radiant (see Shemos 34:29). It was shining to the point that a person could not look at him. From that point on, unless Moshe was speaking to the people, he wore a veil. People could not handle looking at him otherwise (*Karnei* could also be translated as horns, hence Michelangelo’s statue of Moshe has horns; it’s a mistranslation and no, we don’t wear a kippah to cover them).

The Midrash (*Yalkut Shemoni*) says, Rabbi Yehudah bar Nahman said that when Moshe finished writing the Torah, there remained in the quill/pen a little bit of ink left. Moshe rubbed the little bit of ink on his forehead and that is where the rays of glory came from. Ask the **Chanukas HaTorah**: Hashem knows everything - He knew how many words go into the Torah, so why would there be ink left? If there was ink left, why write it on Moshe’s face?

He answers that there was ink left in the Torah from every place that Moshe’s name was supposed to be written in Parshas Tetzaveh. Because Moshe’s name was left out, all that extra ink was in the pen. The reason why it was put on Moshe’s face is to teach us that if one is Moser Nefesh (does an act of self-sacrifice) for the sake of the Jewish people. Hashem glorifies such a person and makes everyone understand and recognize that “this is a Jewish hero.”

Whenever people saw Moshe’s rays shining from his face, this was because Moshe was willing to sacrifice himself for the Jewish people. This was tremendous praise to him. We saw this from Eliyahu, who said people sinned and there was no hope, and wasn’t willing to go to bat for the Jewish, prompting Hashem to tell him to take the next fiery chariot up to Heaven, being that he lost his job.

The Parsha tells us (Shemos 33:7) that “*Moshe took the tent and pitched it for himself outside the camp, distancing [it] from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting, and it would be that anyone seeking Hashem would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp.*” **Rashi** (ibid. 33:11) then told Moshe that he should return to the camp. Hashem said to him, “I am angry, and you are angry. Who then will bring them near [to Me]?” (Midrash Tanchuma 27).

In simple terms, Hashem was telling Moshe, “You are their leader, you must be with them, and you have to bring them back. When you do, your face shines and everyone sees that you are a hero for the Jewish people.”



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MITZVAH # 134 – REST ON SHABBOSS

We are required to rest on Shabbos, which is the seventh day of the week. As the Pasuk (Shemos 23:12) says, “*On the seventh day you shall rest*”. We, our animals, and our servants must rest from doing “*melachos*” - types of work forbidden by the Torah.

The Gemara speaks of the 39 categories of work that are forbidden. The **Minchas Chinuch** says: If one accidentally violates one of the 39 categories of work, then he must bring a *Korban Olah* for having violated this positive commandment (in addition to a *Korban Chatos*).



One of the many topics at the beginning of the Parsha is the formulation of the Ketores and the instructions surrounding it. I would like to use this as an opportunity to discuss the sense of smell, one of the most neglected senses. The Torah tells us that it is Assur to assemble the Ketores or to burn it for our own purposes. The Gemara says that this applies even when making it in a small quantity. There are many reasons and insights given in the Sefarim as to what the purpose of the Ketores was.

We can say simply that it was used as a method of bringing a pleasant/relaxing aroma into the Mikdash. The **Rambam** writes that it served to neutralize the bad odors caused by the Korbanos being slaughtered. Besides for masking foul smells, there are many ways that scents can improve the quality of our lives. Let's look at a few:

Improving Mood: Aromas like **lavender** and **saffron** (the Ketores ingredient of Charkom) can help reduce stress and anxiety, and promote relaxation.

Enhancing Sleep: Scents like **lavender**, **chamomile**, and **spikenard** (the Ketores ingredient of Shiboles Nard) are known for their calming properties and can help improve sleep quality.

Boosting Mental Clarity and Focus: **Peppermint**, **rosemary**, and **cinnamon (Kinamon)** are commonly used to improve cognitive function, alertness, and concentration.

Reducing Physical Tension: Aromas like **eucalyptus**, **peppermint**, and **frankincense (Levona)** are commonly used to relieve physical tension, especially for headaches, muscle soreness, or sinus issues.

Promoting Relaxation and Stress Relief: Aromas such as **frankincense (Levona)**, **myrrh (Mor)**, and **rose** can help lower cortisol levels, which is the hormone associated with stress.

Enhancing Meditation: Incorporating **sandalwood**, **frankincense**, and **myrrh** can deepen your meditation space and enhance mindfulness and connection to the *Ein Sof*.

Takeaway: By incorporating the right aromas into your daily routine, you can help balance your emotions, boost your health, and elevate your overall sense of well-being. A happy, healthy, and present self can accomplish a whole lot more!

Sometimes a reward for a good deed is immediate, while other times it takes a few years, and sometimes even a few generations. We see that Betzalel was the person who merited to build the Mishkan - Hashem's resting place. However, why was he specifically the person chosen for this task? The reason is because of his grandfather, Chur, who protested the building of the *Eigel* (Golden Calf) and paid for it with his life. The Mishkan, which served as the atonement for that sin, was given to his grandson to construct.

Hashem always rewards those who do good. **Rabbi Shimon Finkelman**, Shlita, tells the story of a secular family in Israel that was in the business of shipping produce and delivering their products to different locations. One of their sons, Yair, turned 18 and got involved in the business. He took his father's route to deliver and one of the locations was a Yeshiva, which Yair never saw in his life. Yair saw such wonderful people with terrific Middos (traits) and he started connecting with the students and the Rabbis on his weekly deliveries.

When his father heard this, he was very upset and commanded his son, "Don't you ever step foot in that place again!" Yair was confused and told his father just how much he enjoyed the experience of being around such incredible people who learned Torah. The father became very abusive to the point that the son had to leave home. The father then pressed charges against the son and the Yeshiva for brainwashing his child to join a cult, and the case ended up in the courts.

The son testified that he became observant on his own, while the elderly judge stared at the father. The judge then asked the father, "You look familiar...is your original name Shtark?" The father replied affirmatively, and the judge also figured out that the father was from his town of Pinsk. The judge then told the father, "I remember your parents; they were very righteous people. I also remember that you were the one who publicly desecrated Shabbat and gave so much grief to your parents."

I also distinctly remember your holy mother crying and praying for you to become observant. I was confused why her prayers weren't being answered. Today, I see that her prayer was answered as her son became righteous! No prayers ever go unanswered."

The judge told the father, "When people questioned your behavior, you told them you are 18 years old, and you could do whatever you want now. So, I tell you that your son is also 18 now and he can go to Yeshiva and do whatever he chooses!" The judge then dismissed the case. Hashem always answers our prayers; we just need to wait sometimes for them to be answered.

When cleaning for Pesach, we removed clothes from closets and cleaned. We lifted couch pillows and vacuumed; must we lift the pillows during bedikas chametz and remove the clothes again?

One is required to do *bedikas chametz* in all places where one places chametz or is possible that one placed it there. For example, the Gemara says that occasionally one enters a wine cellar during a meal to take wine, and it is possible that one was holding bread at that time and left it behind in the cellar. Since it is possible that chametz is in that room, it requires *bedikah*. One is not required to do *bedikas chametz* in a room one will not enter with chametz. This is known as *מקום שאין מכניסין בו חמץ*.

How does this affect the former question?

A cupboard that was emptied/cleaned for Pesach and checked for chametz, will not require to be emptied again for *bedikas chametz*, on condition that one was careful not to place chametz in that cupboard. The cupboard will be a place where one will not have Chametz and will not require further *bedika*.

But then I suppose most of the house is like that - everything was cleaned so what are we looking for?

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, ZT"l, writes that in such an event, it suffices to go over the areas mentioned above and confirm that it was cleaned. For example, one thoroughly emptied and cleaned coat pockets, bags, and purses. One need not check every pocket again during *bedikas chametz*, it suffices to make sure that each coat was cleaned. As mentioned, this applies only to places and items that were not used in any way with chametz once they have been cleaned.

So where do we do a proper bedikah?

Anywhere that was used after cleaning or if one has little children at home who take chametz anywhere in the house. Since chametz might have been used in these places, they require a thorough *bedikah*.

How does participating in a siyum alleviate the need to fast?

When one hears the learner "end" the maseches he learned, one joins in the simcha at that point and eats with him. Consequently, arriving to the "siyum" after the learner completed the maseches is not the real simcha and does not alleviate the need to fast.

Already elderly, **Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv**, ZT"l, was walking to his house one day when he encountered a very undesirable surprise. Crack, splat, crunch. Somebody had just egged him! More astonishing than the fact that someone had the *chutzpah* to throw eggs - not just at an elderly man but at the *gadol hador* - was the Rav's reaction. Remembering the Gemara, which states that a talmid chacham shouldn't walk in public with very dirty clothes, he showed not the slightest hint of frustration, let alone anger. Instead, he simply took out his handkerchief and began cleaning himself.

However, not only did Rav Elyashiv refrain from getting angry, but he recognized that someone whose bitterness overflowed to the point of throwing eggs at an old man must be harboring even deeper frustration and anger inside. He also realized that such a person likely had too much free time if he could engage in such *shtick*. The Rav walked over to the man and blessed him - not just with a standard blessing, but one specifically suited to him. He discovered that this man and his wife had struggled for years to have children. The Rav blessed him that he should have more fruitful things to occupy him. About a year later, his wife gave birth to triplets. From that point, he was indeed a busy man.

Comment: In this week's Parsha, Ki Sisa, we learn about one of Bnei Yisrael's worst sins - the sin of the Golden Calf. Despite the Parsha's somber undertone; However, we also find within it Hashem's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, the cornerstone of our penitential prayers for the last two thousand years. Perhaps, Hashem is signaling to us through this that no matter how greatly we mess up, no matter how low we fall, though the path may be long and arduous, there is always a way back.

**SPLENDID QUOTE OF THE WEEK
BY RABBI MENACHEM LOMNER**

"When the rich and important people honor the Torah, it helps all give respect."

The Gemara (Nedarim 38a) says that Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu to prepare the second set of sapphire *Luchos* (Tablets) and that he should keep all the shavings. This enabled Moshe to become extremely affluent. Other *nevi'im* (prophets) were also very rich as mentioned there. One can ask what the significance of Moshe was being very wealthy. The Gemara says that when someone is rich, he has a responsibility.

We humans are affected by money and are by those who have a lot of it. Therefore, if one is rich and he shows respect for the Torah, others who respect him will now honor the Torah. Moshe was wealthier than the others in order for the people to gain extra respect for the Torah and Mitzvos.



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Summary: We are currently discussing the trait of Chassidus, namely the idea of how to honor Hashem beyond the bare minimum. Now, the Ramchal is going to turn his attention to honoring Hashem through honoring the special times on the calendar He created.

The Ramchal writes: “Included in this category, is honoring Shabbos and Festivals. For whoever gives much honor to these, certainly brings gratification to his Maker, who thus commanded us: ‘You shall honor it’ (Isaiah 58:13). Once it has become established to us as truth that honoring the Shabbos is a Mitzvah, there are many different ways to honor it. But the general principle is that any action which shows importance to Shabbos, we should do.” (Mesilas Yesharim, Chapter 19)

The Gemara (Yerushalmi, Berachos 1:8) writes that keeping Shabbos properly is equivalent to observing the entire Torah. **Rabbi Abraham Twerski**, ZT”L, adds (in *Lights Along the Way*) that we see Shabbos is more than just a day of physical rest, which is a day to recharge one’s batteries. Shabbos isn’t secondary to the week; it’s the opposite and in our Tefillos we look forward to Shabbos every day (when we say, “Today is the X Day to Shabbos”)

Rabbi Twerski cites kabbalistic writings that refer to Shabbos as the day of the Neshama. We believe that the essence of life is the soul, and the body is simply a tool through which the soul operates. Similarly, the purpose of creation is for the seventh day and the six weekdays are only there so we can amass the provisions we need to celebrate Shabbos.

As such, Shabbos should be a day of reflection, meditation, prayer, and Torah study. We have our Shabbos delights, but instead of being an indulgence, having festive meals is one of the ways to honor the Shabbos. We may visit friends, but the goal of the visit should be to build relationships and help them.

The Torah (Shemos 20:11) tells us, “*In six days Hashem made heaven and earth and then rested on the seventh day*”, a line that we quote at Kiddush. We testify that there is a purpose to this world, even though only Hashem knows the true reason why He made it. Each person has a mission and a responsibility, and Shabbos is the day one can think about our obligations and the worth and values this holy day should bring out.

The most classic way we know to honor Shabbos is to dress more finely than during the week. Yet, there is so much more to making the day feel special and as a result, tapping into its potential. It’s not just about the routine of the day but setting the tone for Shabbos with what we talk about and how, as well as how we get ready for it.

Next week, we will, B’H, look at some examples the Ramchal brings from the Gemara on honoring Shabbos and how we should apply them on our level.

“The rich shall give no more and the poor shall give no less than half a shekel, to give the offering to Hashem, to atone for your souls” (Shemos 30:15)

The Torah set the contribution of every individual at a half-shekel to indicate that each person is only a half in their own right. A person cannot truly perfect himself without finding a spouse who will complete him, a friend who will complement him, or a teacher who can lead him to perfection. When a person gave a half-shekel to represent himself in the census, it gave him the self-awareness of his shortcomings and the realization that his mission in life was to make himself more complete.

“You shall make a washstand of copper and its base of copper for washing, and you shall place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and you shall put water therein” (ibid. 30:18)

The Kiyor was made from copper mirrors that the women donated to the Mishkan. In Parshas Vayakhel, **Rashi** comments that Moshe felt it was not appropriate for the mirrors to be used for the holy construction because they were objects used for vanity. Hashem told him to use them anyway because they had been used for a lofty purpose in Mitzrayim. When the men would come home from their hard labor, the women would adorn themselves and show their husbands how beautiful they looked in their mirrors. They would comment about how beautiful they looked compared to the men in order to entice them so that they would be with them despite their weariness. Because of this, many children were born in Mitzrayim.

Since the women used these mirrors for the sacred goal of having children and not just for vanity, it was indeed fitting that they be used in the Mishkan. We learn from these women to be optimistic and to always have hope for the future, even in the worst of circumstances.

Hashem wanted the Kohanim to be reminded of this optimism every time they began their service, when they washed their hands and feet, so that this optimism would be expressed through the service that they would perform. After all, they were the leaders of the people and oftentimes leaders face major challenges and are under great stress. Hashem wanted the Kohanim to remember to have a positive attitude as they began their holy tasks each morning

“They have quickly turned away from the path that I have commanded them; they have made themselves a molten calf! They have prostrated bowed to it, slaughtered sacrifices to it, and said: These are your gods, Israel, who have brought you up from the land of Egypt.” (ibid. 32:8)

How is it that the Jewish people sinned so egregiously by making a golden calf only a short period of time after hearing Hashem speak to them at Har Sinai? **Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz** explained that the people thought that Moshe Rabbeinu had passed, since he had not returned at the time that they were anticipating his arrival. This left them feeling leaderless and a person who lacks proper guidance will falter very quickly. The story of the golden calf shows us the importance of having a rabbi or a mentor, someone to listen to and seek advice from.



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