

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXII: Vayakhel (Ex. 35:1–38:20)

Essay 7. Atoning for the Golden Calf

מדרש רבה "ראו קרא ה' בשם בצלאל", הנדא הוא דכתיב "אֶרְפָּא מְשׁוּבְתָם אֲהֵבֵם נְדָבָה", מה כתיב למעלה "הביאו בני ישראל נדבאל נדבה לה" "ואחר כך" "ראו קרא ה' בשם בצלאל", אלא כשעשו העגל אמר הקב"ה למשה "ועתה הניחה לי" וכו', אמר לו בדוק אותן שיעשו המשכן, מה כתיב באותה קלקלה "פִּרְקוּ נְזָמֵי הַזֶּהָב", ומה הביאו נזמים, וכשעשו המשכן עשו אותו נדבה ומה כתיב "כל נדיב לב הביאו חח ונזנם וטבעת וכומז", בנזמים חטאו ובנזמים נתרצה להם, ורום הקדוש צונח על ידי הושע "נהיה במקום אשר-אמר להם לא-עמי אתם ואמר להם בני אל-הי" עכ"ל.

Midrash Rabbah:

“[And Moses said to the Israelites:] **See, the L-rd has called out by name Bezalel** [son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, endowing him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge in every kind of craft].”¹ **This is** [the meaning of] **that which is written, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.”**² **What is written previously? “The Israelites brought a freewill offering to the L-rd,”**³ **and afterward** [it is written], **“See, the L-rd has called out by name Bezalel.”** **Rather, when they made the [Golden] Calf, the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses, “Now, let Me be** [that My anger may blaze forth against them and that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation].”⁴ **[Moses] said to Him: “Test them; let them make the Tabernacle.”** **What is written about that iniquity** [of the Golden Calf]? **“Remove the gold rings** [that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me].”⁵ **What did they bring? They brought rings. When they made the Tabernacle they brought it as a freewill offering. What is written? “Everyone generous of heart brought a bracelet, an earring, a ring, and a girdle.”**⁶ **With rings they sinned and with rings He was reconciled with them. The Divine Spirit called out through**

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¹ Ex. 35:30–31.

² Hosea 14:5.

³ Ex. 35:29.

⁴ Ex. 32:10.

⁵ Ex. 32:2.

⁶ Ex. 35:22.

Hosea: “Instead of it being said to them: You are not My people, it will be said to them: Children of the living G-d.”⁷

- Ex. Rabbah 48:6

צָרִיף עֵינָיו אִם עָקַר הַדְרֻשָּׁה הוּא עַל פְּסוּק "הַבְּיָאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל נִדְבָה לֵה" , לְמַה סָמַךְ תְּחִלַּת דְּבָרָיו עַל פְּסוּק "רְאוּ קְרָא ה' בְּשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל" כְּדֵי לֹאמַר מַה כְּתִיב לְמַעַלְהָ וְכוּ'. וְזֶה עֲנָנָן "רְאוּ קְרָא ה' בְּשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל" עִם פְּסוּק "אֶרְפָּא מְשׁוּבְתָם" וְכוּ'. וְאִיךָ קָאָמַר בְּנִזְמִים חֲטָאוּ וּבְנִזְמִים גִּתְרָצָה לְהֵם וְהָא אִין קְטִיגוֹר נַעֲשָׂה סְנִיגוֹר. וְעוֹד וּמַהוּ וְרוּם הַקְדָּשׁ צוֹנַחַת וְכוּ'.

This requires examination: If the main point of the commentary is about the verse, “The Israelites brought a freewill offering to the L-rd,” why does [the author] begin his words with the verse, “See, the L-rd has called out by name Bezalel” in order to say, “What is written previously”?

What is the connection of “See, the L-rd has called out by name Bezalel” with the verse, “I will heal their backsliding”?

How can it be said, “With rings they sinned and with rings He was reconciled with them,” for isn’t it so that “a prosecutor cannot become an advocate.”⁸ I.e., as the Gemara explains in tractate Rosh Hashanah, the High Priest doesn’t enter the Holy of Holies with golden garments, because that would bring to mind the sin of the Golden Calf. Thus, if rings were used for sinning by fashioning the Golden Calf, how can other rings be used for reconciliation?

Also, what is meant by, “The Divine Spirit called out”?

וְיֵשׁ לְדַקְדָּק עוֹד בְּפְסוּק זֶה "רְאוּ קְרָא ה' בְּשֵׁם" , לְמַה אָמַר "רְאוּ". וּמִלְבַּד דְּרֵשׁ רַז"ל, עוֹד יֵשׁ לֹאמַר דְּאִיתָא שֶׁם בְּמִדְרָשׁ, בְּשִׁעָה שְׁעֵשׂוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל הָעֵגֶל עֲמַד חוֹר וְנִתְּן נַפְשׁוֹ עַל הַקַּב"ה, אָמַר לוֹ חַיִּיךָ כָּל בְּנִים הַיּוֹצֵאִים מִמֶּךָ אֲנִי מְגַדְלֵם שֶׁם טוֹב בְּעוֹלָם שְׂנֵאָמַר "רְאוּ קְרָא ה' בְּשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל" וְכוּ' עכ"ל.

We need to check further this verse, “See, the L-rd has called out by name Bezalel.” Why did it say “See”?

Aside from the explanation of the rabbis, of blessed memory, it can also be said that it is brought there in the Midrash that when Israel made the Golden Calf, Hur stood and protested and was murdered; thus, he gave his life for the sake of the Holy One, Blessed be He.⁹ [G-d] said to him: “By your life, all the descendants who emerge from you, I will elevate them and grant them a good name in the world,” as it is stated: “See, the L-rd has called out by name Bezalel, son of Uri son of Hur.”¹⁰

⁷ Hosea 2:1.

⁸ Rosh Hashanah 26a.

⁹ Sanhedrin 7a.

¹⁰ Ex. Rabbah 48:3.

וְנִדְוַע שֶׁהַמִּשְׁכָּן נַעֲשֶׂה לְתִיקוֹן עוֹן הָעֵגֶל, יבא זָהָב שֶׁבַמִּשְׁכָּן ויכפר על זָהָב שֶׁבַעֲגָל, וְכֵדִי שֶׁלֹּא יִצְטַעְרוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לומר אף כי נִתְכַפֵּר עוֹן הָעֵגֶל בְּזָהָב הַמִּשְׁכָּן, עֲדִיין נִשְׁאָר לָנוּ עוֹן חֲמוֹר שֶׁל שְׁפִיכַת דַּמִּים שֶׁהִרְגִנוּ אֶת חוֹר, לָכֵן כְּדִי לְנַחֵם אוֹתָם אָמַר "רְאוּ קְרָא ה' בְּשֵׁם בְּצִלְאֵל", שֶׁהוּאִיל שֶׁהַקַּב"ה קְרָא בְּנוֹ בְּשֵׁם, כְּבָר קָבַל שְׂכָרוֹ וְאִין עוֹד מְקַטְרֵג בְּכֶם. וְכִמוֹ שֶׁהוּא מַת בַּמַּעֲשֵׂה הָעֵגֶל, כֵּן בְּנוֹ יִתְגַּדֵּל בְּשֵׁם עַל מַעֲשֵׂה הַמִּשְׁכָּן שֶׁהוּא לְתִיקוֹן מַעֲשֵׂה הָעֵגֶל, וּבְטוֹחִים אַתֶּם שֶׁתִּשְׁרַה שְׂכִינָה בַּמַּעֲשֵׂה יְדִיכֶם. וְהִשְׁתָּא קָאָמַר שְׁפִיר הֵדָא הוּא דְכְתִיב "אֲרָפָא מְשׁוּבְתָם" וְכוּ', דְּמִדְקָאָמַר הַפְּתוּב "רְאוּ קְרָא" וְכוּ' מוֹכַח דְ"אֲרָפָא מְשׁוּבְתָם".

It is known that the Tabernacle was made to atone for the sin of the Golden Calf. “The Holy One, Blessed be He, said, ‘Let the gold in the Tabernacle atone for the gold of the [Golden] Calf.’”¹¹ **In order that Israel wouldn’t despair, saying, “Even though the sin of the [Golden] Calf was atoned for with the gold of the Tabernacle, we still have the grave sin of shedding blood because we killed Hur,” therefore, to comfort them, it says, “See, the L-rd has called out by name Bezalel [son of Uri son of Hur].” That is, since the Holy One, Blessed be He, called his son by name, he has already received his reward, and there is no accuser against you anymore. Just as Hur died because of the Golden Calf, so his son will be exalted by name for the work of the Tabernacle, which serves to rectify the act of the Golden Calf. You are assured that the Shechinah will dwell in the work of your hands.**

Now, it is explained well: **This is what is written, “I will heal their backsliding,” because when the verse says, “See, the L-rd has called out by name Bezalel,” it proves that “I will heal their backsliding.”** I.e., the word “see” points out Hur’s reward, showing that the sin has been atoned.

וְאִם תֵּאמַר אִיךְ אָמַר הַפְּתוּב "רְאוּ קְרָא" וְכוּ' שֶׁמִּשְׁמַע שְׂכָבָר נִמְחַל לָהֶם עוֹן הָעֵגֶל, וְהִלֵּא עֲדִיין לֹא נַעֲשֶׂה הַמִּשְׁכָּן. לָכֵן אָמַר מִה כְּתִיב לְמַעַל "הִבִּיאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל נְדָבָה" וְכוּ', וְאַחַר כֵּף "רְאוּ קְרָא ה'" וְכוּ' דְּמִיד שֶׁהִבִּיאוּ הַנְּדָבָה נִתְכַפֵּר לָהֶם, וּמִשׁוֹם הִכִּי תִכְף וּמִיד אָמַר "רְאוּ קְרָא ה'" וְכוּ'. וְלִמָּה מִיד שֶׁהִבִּיאוּ הַנְּדָבָה נִתְכַפֵּר לָהֶם, שֶׁכִּשְׁאָמַר לוֹ הַקַּב"ה לְמַעַל "וְעַתָּה הִנֵּי־יָתִיד לִי", אָמַר לוֹ בְּדוֹק אוֹתָן שֶׁיַּעֲשׂוּ הַמִּשְׁכָּן, וְיָמָה עֲנִין בְּדִיקָה זֶה, לְפִי שֶׁיִּשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדוּ הָעֵגֶל, אָבַל עֲקַר הַדָּבָר הָיָה הָעֲרָב רַב שֶׁחֲטָאוּ וְהֵם הִחְטִיאוּ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Maybe you will say, how can the verse say, “See, the L-rd has called out by name Bezalel,” which we say means that the sin of the Golden Calf has already been erased for them, since the Tabernacle had not yet been made at that time?

Therefore, it said, “What is written previously? ‘The Israelites brought a freewill offering to the L-rd,’ and afterward [it is written], “See, the L-rd has called out by name Bezalel.” Immediately upon them bringing the freewill offering, it atoned for them, then it immediately said, “See, the L-rd has called out by name Bezalel.” By juxtaposing these verses, we see that the atonement was achieved immediately when they brought the donations for the Tabernacle.

Why, upon bringing the freewill offering, did it immediately atone for them? Because when the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses, “Now, let Me be [that My anger may blaze forth against them and that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation],” [Moses] said to Him: “Test them; let them make the Tabernacle.” What is the meaning of this test? It is

¹¹ Midrash Tanchuma, Teruma, note 8:3.

because Israel worshiped the Golden Calf, but the primary culprits were the mixed multitude (“the Erev Rav”) who sinned and who caused Israel to sin.

וְלִכְּנֹן צָרִיף בְּדִיקָה אִם הָאֱמֶת הוּא כִּי, שְׂאֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָבִיאוּ נְזֻמִּים לְמִשְׁכַּן מוֹכַח מִכָּאֵן שִׁישְׂרָאֵל הָיוּ עֹקֵר בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הָעֶגְלָה, וְנִתְבַּיֵּשׁוּ לְהִבְיֵא הַנְּזֻמִּים לְמִשְׁכַּן, כְּמוֹ שֶׁעָשָׂה שְׂאוֹל כְּשֶׁהֶעֱלָה אֶת שְׂמוּאֵל, וְאָמַר לוֹ "וְלֹא-עָנְנִי עוֹד . . . גַּם-בְּחַלְמוֹת" וְכוּ' וְאִילוּ בְּאוֹרִים וְתוֹמִים לֹא קָאָמַר, בְּשִׁבִיל שֶׁהָרַג גּוֹב עִיר הַכֹּהֲנִים.

Therefore, a test was needed to determine if this was true. That is, if Israel didn't bring the rings for the Tabernacle, it would prove that they were primarily responsible for the making of the Golden Calf, and that they were embarrassed to bring the rings for the Tabernacle, as was Saul when he rose Samuel from the dead to consult with him.¹² That is, Saul said to Samuel, “The Philistines are attacking me and G-d has turned away from me; **He no longer answers me, either by prophets or in dreams; so I have called you to tell me what I am to do.”¹³ **He did not say that he consulted the *Urim VeTummim*, because he had killed all the residents of Nob, the city of priests.**¹⁴ Thus, he was ashamed to consult the *Urim VeTummim*, which required the services of a priest.¹⁵**

אָמְנָם אִם יָבִיאוּ הַנְּזֻמִּים יִהְיֶה מוֹכַח שִׁישְׂרָאֵל לֹא הָיוּ עֹקֵר בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הָעֶגְלָה, וּמִשּׁוֹם הַכִּי לֹא נִתְבַּיֵּשׁוּ לְהִבְיֵא הַנְּזֻמִּים, אֲלֵא הָעָרִב רַב הָיוּ הֵם שִׁשְׁחָתוּ וְהִשְׁחִיתוּ כְּמוֹ שֶׁפָּרַשׁ רַשִׁ"י עַל פְּסוּק "לְהִרְדּוּ כִּי שִׁחַת עֲמָה" וְכוּ' וְעֵי"ש. וְזֶהוּ בְּנְזֻמִּים חֻטְאוֹ, אוֹתָם שִׁחְטָאוֹ, וּבְנְזֻמִּים גִּתְרָצָה לָהֶם, לְיִשְׂרָאֵל. וְעוֹד שֶׁבְּעֶגְלָה לֹא טָעוּ אַחֲרָיו רַק הִמְיֵעוּט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתַב הַיְפָה תֵּאֵר עַל הַפְּסוּק "אוֹ-שׁוֹר אוֹ-שָׂה" וְכוּ' שֶׁבְּעֶגְלָה לֹא טָעוּ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרָיו אֲלֵא מִיֵּעוּטָא דְּמִיֵּעוּטָא, וּבְגִדְבַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן הִתְנַדְּבוּ כְּלָם אוֹ רִיבָם.

However, if they had brought the rings, it would be proven that Israel was not primarily responsible for the incident of the Golden Calf. Because of this, they were not ashamed to bring the rings; rather, it was the mixed multitude who were the ones who corrupted themselves and corrupted others, as Rashi explained on the verse, “The L-rd spoke to Moses, “Go, descend, Hurry down, for your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, have acted basely,”¹⁶ and see there.¹⁷

This is the meaning of “With rings they sinned,” referring to those that did sin, “and with rings He was reconciled with them,” meaning to Israel.

Furthermore, with the Golden Calf, only a minority of Israel sinned, as the *Yefeh To'ar* wrote on the verse, “When any party gives to another a donkey, an ox, a sheep or any other

¹² I Sam. 28.

¹³ I Sam. 28:15.

¹⁴ I Sam. 22.

¹⁵ Berachot 12b; Lev. Rabbah 26:7.

¹⁶ Ex. 32:7.

¹⁷ Rashi on Ex. 32:7: “It does not say ‘the people’ have corrupted but ‘your people’—the mixed multitude whom you received of your own accord and accepted as proselytes without consulting Me. You thought it a good thing that proselytes should be attached to the Shechinah—now they have corrupted themselves and have corrupted others.” (Based on Ex. Rabbah 42:6).

animal to guard,”¹⁸ that with the Golden Calf, only a very small minority of Israel erred because of it.¹⁹ But in the offering for the Tabernacle, all or most of the people donated.

ואם תאמר וכי לא היתה גלוי להקב"ה שישראל לא חטאו אלא מתמת הערב רב, ומה צורך לבדיקה זו. ויש לומר שהבדיקה לא היתה אלא כדי לסתום פה למידת הדין ולאמות העולם, שלא יאמרו שהקב"ה נשא פנים לישראל שלא כדין, ועכשיו שראו בדיקה זו היא ראיה מכרסת שלא חטאו, ומשום הכי רוס הקדש צונחת, כדי לפרסם הדבר לשבחון של ישראל ולהודיע לכל שישראל לא חטאו.

May you will say, wasn't it obvious to the Holy One, Blessed be He, that Israel only sinned because of the mixed multitude? What was the need for this test? It can be said that the test was only to silence the attribute of strict justice and the nations of the world, so that they wouldn't say that the Holy One, Blessed be He, showed favor to Israel unjustly. Now, when they saw this test, it was a compelling proof that Israel did not sin. Therefore, the Divine Spirit cried out, in order to publicize this matter, to praise Israel, and to announce to everyone that Israel did not sin.

ואם תאמר אם בעגל לא טעו מישראל אחריו אלא מיעוטא דמיעוטא וכדמשמע מסוגיא דפרק ו' דיומא שמח בלבבו, בהדרוקו וכו', למה חרה אף ה' בהם ובקש לכלות כלם דכתיב "ועתה הניחה לי" וכו'. דיש לומר דהואיל שרובם לא חטאו מקרי שיש בידם למחות ולא מיחו.

If you say, if for the Golden Calf, only a very small minority of Israel went astray, as implied in the discussion of the 6th chapter of tractate *Yoma*, regarding one who rejoiced inwardly in celebration of idolatry, which was not subject to capital punishment by a human court, [was killed] by Divine punishment in the form of by the intestinal illness known as *hidrokan*.

Why did G-d's anger burn against them, and why did He seek to destroy them all, as it is written, "Now, let Me be [that My anger may blaze forth against them and that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation." It can be said that since the majority of them did not sin, they were considered to have the ability to protest against the making of the Golden Calf, but they did not protest.

אי נמי בדרך אחר יש לפרש עגלן בדיקה זו וכו' בנזמים חטאו ובנזמים נתרצה להם, שישראל מתחלה כשעשו את העגל לא היתה פוננתם לכפור בעקר חס ושלום, אלא לעשותו כמו מנהיג שיגיד לפניהם תמורת משה, וכדכתיב "קום עשה-לנו" וכו', וכמו דור אגוש שהיו מאמינים בסיבה ראשונה שהיא לבדו ברא העולם כגודע, אבל האומות היו סוכרים שישראל חטאו ממש בעבודה זרה גמורה וכפרו בעקר ועיין במפרשים ז"ל, ובנדבכת המשפן איגלאי מילתא למפרע שלא היתה פוננתם חס ושלום לכפור בעקר, אלא לבקש מנהיג שיוזר להם הדרך, הפך סברת האומות.

Alternatively, another way to explain this matter of the test is: "With rings they sinned and with rings He was reconciled with them," that Israel initially when they made the Golden Calf, their intention was not to deny the fundamental principles of faith, G-d forbid, but rather to make a leader to go before them in place of Moses.

¹⁸ Ex. 22:9.

¹⁹ Rabbi Shmuel Yaffe Ashkenazi, *Yefeh To'ar* (1692), commenting on Lev. Rabbah 37:8.

This is as it is written, “Rise, make us a god who shall go before us, for that fellow Moses—the man who brought us from the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him.”²⁰ This is like the generation of Enosh, who believed in the First Cause as the one who created the universe, as is known.²¹ However, the nations believed that Israel had truly sinned with complete idol worship and had denied the fundamental principles of faith. See the commentators, of blessed memory.

But with the offering for the Tabernacle, it became clear in hindsight that their intention was not, G-d forbid, to deny the fundamental principles of faith, but rather to seek a leader to guide them on the path, the opposite of the belief of the nations.

וְהִינּוּ כְמוֹ שֶׁפָּתַח הַרַמְבַּ"ם וְצַ"ל בְּפִירוּשׁוֹ עַל הַזֹּהַר (בְּפֶרֶשֶׁת פְּקוּדֵי דָף רכ"ד ע"א) שֶׁנִּרְאָה מִשָּׁם שֶׁיִּשְׂרָאֵל נִתְּנוּ כֹּל זֶהָבָם לְמִשְׁכַּן קֹדֶם מַעֲשֵׂה הַעֲגֹל, וְהוּא הִפָּךְ מֵהַ שֶׁפָּתַח הַזֹּהַר בְּמִקְוֹמוֹת אַחֵרִים וְעוֹד הִפָּךְ פֶּשֶׁט הַפְּתוּבִים וְדַבְּרֵי רַז"ל, וְתִירָץ הוּא שֶׁ, שֶׁבְּנֵדָאֵי נִצְטוּוּ עַל מְלֻאכֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן קֹדֶם שֶׁיַּעֲלֶה מֹשֶׁה לְהַר הַפַּעַם הָרִאשׁוֹנָה, וּמֵאַזְ תִּכְף וּמִיָּד הִפְרִישׁוּ כֹּל זֶהָבָם וַיִּתְּדוּהוּ לְקְדוּשָׁה, אֲבָל עֲדֵיין לֹא נִצְטוּוּ דְרָךְ פְּרִט עַל עֲנִין הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְכִלְיוֹ, שֶׁזֶה לֹא הִנָּה אֶלָּא לְאַחַר שֶׁיָּרַד מֹשֶׁה מִן הַהָר בְּיוֹם הַכִּיפּוּרִים, וּמִשׁוֹם הַכִּי אָמַר אֱהָרֹן וְאָוִמֵר לָהֶם "לְמִי זֶהָב", שֶׁהָרִי כֵּלָם הִפְרִישׁוּהוּ לְקְדוּשָׁה וְלֹא הִנָּה מִן הָרִאשׁוֹנִי לְהוֹצִיאֹ לְדַבְּרֵים אַחֵרִים וְלְהוֹרִידוֹ מִקְדוּשָׁה לְטוֹמְאָה חַס וְשָׁלוֹם, שֶׁכִּבֵּר הִנָּה מוֹכֵן לְמִיתוּק וְתִיקוֹן גְּבוּרוֹת הַקְּדוּשׁוֹת וְכוּ'.

This is similar to what Rabbi Moshe Zacuto of blessed memory wrote in his commentary on the Zohar (in Parashat Pekudei, page Zohar 224a), where it appears from there that Israel gave all their gold for the Tabernacle before the incident of the Golden Calf. This is the opposite of what the Zohar writes in other places, and also contrary to the plain meaning of the verses and the words of the rabbis, of blessed memory. [Rabbi Zacuto] answered there that certainly they were commanded about the work of the Tabernacle before Moses ascended the mountain the first time. Immediately after, they set aside all their gold and dedicated it to holiness. However, they had not yet been commanded about the details of the matter of the Tabernacle and its utensils, as this command was only given after Moses descended from the mountain on Yom Kippur. Therefore, Aaron said to them, “Whoever has gold, take it off,”²² since they had all already set it aside for holiness, and it was not appropriate to use it for other purposes or to lower it from holiness to impurity, G-d forbid, as it had already been prepared for the perfection and rectification of the holy *Gevurot*, etc. The *kliptot* gain nourishment from the *Gevurot*, so rectifying the *Gevurot* will weaken the *kliptot*.

²⁰ Ex. 32:1.

²¹ Gen. 4:26: “And to Seth, in turn, a son was born, and he named him Enosh. It was then that they began to invoke the name of the L-rd.” While Enosh believed that the L-rd had created the universe, they thought he had created the stars and spheres to govern the world, and that led to idolatry. See Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Idol Worship 1:1.

²² Ex. 32:24.

וניש לו סיוע לזה מדברי הזהר, שהרי בפסוק "ונגש משה לבדו אלה" כמב ובהיא שעתא איתבשרו למיהני ביניהו מקדשא וכו', ובפרשת ויקהל כתב (בדף קצ"ז) אהדר לון פמלקדמין, עובדא דמשפנא וכו', ועוד יש לו ראיה מהכתוב בפרשת פקודי "כלהנהב העשוי למלאכה", שתיבת "העשוי" רוצה לומר שפבר הוכן ונעשה קודש למלאכה, שהרי בכסף נאמר "וכסף פקודי העדה", ובנהושת פתיב "ונהושת התנופה", אבל בנהב פתיב "העשוי למלאכה" ועיי"ש.

He has support for this from the words of the Zohar, for in the verse, “Moses alone shall come near the L-rd,”²³ it is written that at that time it was announced that a sanctuary would be established among them.²⁴ In Parashat Vayakhel, it is written (on page 197a), “He repeated all over again the instructions concerning the making of the Tabernacle,”²⁵ which shows that they had started the work previously.

Also, there is proof from what is written in parashat Pekudei, “All the gold that was used for the work, in all the work of the sanctuary—the elevation offering of gold—came to 29 talents and 730 shekels by the sanctuary weight,”²⁶ where the word “used” means to say that it had already been prepared and consecrated for the work.²⁷ That’s because for the silver, it is said, “The silver of those of the community who were recorded came to 100 talents and 1,775 shekels by the sanctuary weight,”²⁸ and for the copper, it is written, “The copper from the elevation offering came to 70 talents and 2,400 shekels,”²⁹ but for the gold, it is written, “used for the work,” and see there.

ומעתה אף אם נאמר שישראל עשו העגל, בנדאי שעשאוהו בבלי דעת ובלי תבונה, אלא שיצרום הלבישם, שהראה להם דמות משה, והצליחו מעשיו שעלה העגל והיה חי מדבר כמו שכתבו המפרשים, והם כמו אנוסים ולא היה על דעתם לכפור בעקר חס ושלום, וראיה על זה שלא לקחו מהנהב שהכינו לקדושה, אלא "ויתפרקו כל העם את נומי הנהב אשר באזניהם", ובנדבת המשכן היתה אדרבא תחלתה וסופה ואמצעה ברצון.

Now, even if we say that Israel made the Golden Calf, they certainly did so unknowingly and without understanding, but their evil inclination enveloped them, that it showed them Moses’ likeness on his deathbed,³⁰ and their actions succeeded, so that the Golden Calf arose and was living and speaking, as the commentators wrote.³¹ They were like coerced people and had no intention to deny the fundamental principles of faith, G-d forbid. A proof of this is that they did not take the gold they had prepared for holiness, but rather, “and all the people took off the gold rings that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron,”³² and as an offering for the Tabernacle, it was to the contrary, willing from “the beginning, the middle, and the end.”³³

²³ Ex. 24:2.

²⁴ Zohar II:126a (Mishpatim 29:575).

²⁵ Zohar II:197a (Vayakhel 3:42).

²⁶ Ex. 38:24.

²⁷ Zohar II:223b (Pekudei 8:60).

²⁸ Ex. 38:25.

²⁹ Ex. 38:29.

³⁰ Shabbos 89a.

³¹ Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Tisa, note 19.

³² Ex. 32:3.

³³ Cf. Tosafot Bechorot 39a.

ומשום הכי בא זהב המשכן שפבר יחדו והפרישו לקדושה וכפר על מעשה העגל, וזו היא הבדיקה שבדק משה אותם אם הביאו כל מה שהכינו מתחלה, ואם יביאו הנזמים שפבר הוכנו לקדושה, והכנה זו מועלת לישראל לומר שלא היה דעתם לכפור בעקר חס ושלום, שהרי לא מעלו במה שהוכן לקדושה.

Because of this, the gold of the Tabernacle, which they had already set aside and dedicated for holiness, atoned for the act of the Golden Calf. This is the test by which Moses tested them, if they had brought everything they had initially prepared, and whether they brought the rings that had already been consecrated for holiness. This preparation serves to show Israel that they had no intention to deny the fundamental principles of faith, G-d forbid, since they did not misuse what had been set aside for holiness.

ובדרך זה יתורץ מה שהקשו על רש"י ז"ל שפירש על פסוק "ויקח האיש נזם זהב בקע משקלו" רמז לשקלי ישראל בקע לגולגולת, "ושני צמידים על-ידיה" רמז לשתי לוחות וכו', והיפה תאר הקשה עליו מה ענינו לרמז בכאן המהצית השקל.

In this way, we will solve what Rashi of blessed memory questioned, when he explained the verse of Eliezer giving gifts to Rebecca, “the man took a gold nose-ring weighing a beka, and two gold bands [that he placed] on her arms.”³⁴ Regarding the gold nose-ring, Rashi wrote that this was “a hint of the shekels of Israel, a beka a head.”³⁵ One may question Rashi’s comment, as the Torah later explicitly says, “a beka a head, half a shekel by the sanctuary weight.”³⁶ Regarding the “two gold bands [that he placed] on her arms,” Rashi explains this as “a hint of the two Tablets of stone, joined together.”

The *Yefeh To’ar* questioned this: What the connection is here to the half-shekel.

גיש לומר דרש"י בא לתרץ למה לא הניח הנזם על אפה כמו שעשה בצמידים כדכתיב "ושני צמידים על-ידיה". ואין לומר שלא עשה כך מפני צניעות, דאם כן למה בחזרת דבריו אמר "ואשם הנזם על-אפה". אלא ודאי שהטעם הוא מפני שהנזם רומז למהצית השקל, ומהצית השקל לא בא אלא לכפר על מעשה העגל, כדכתיב "כפר נפשו", ואמרין במדרש לפי שעברו על עשרת הדיברות לפיכך יתנו מהצית השקל, שהשקל הוא עשרים גרה, ואם לא היו חוטאים ישראל לא היו צריכים למהצית השקל.

It can be said that Rashi is coming to explain why [Eliezer] did not place the ring on [Rebecca’s] nose, as he did with the bracelets, as it is written “and two gold bands [that he placed] on her arms.” It cannot be said that he didn’t do this out of modesty, for if so, why when he repeated his words to her family, did he say, “And I put the ring on her nose.”³⁷ Rather, certainly the reason is because the ring is a reminder of the half-shekel, and the half-shekel only came about to atone for the making of the Golden Calf, as it is written “a ransom for his soul.”³⁸ It is said in the Midrash: Because [Israel] violated the Ten Commandments,

³⁴ Gen. 24:22.

³⁵ Rashi on Gen. 24:22.

³⁶ Ex. 38:26.

³⁷ Gen. 24:47.

³⁸ Ex. 30:12.

therefore they were given the command of the half-shekel, for the shekel is twenty *gerahs*,³⁹ and if Israel had not sinned, they wouldn't have needed the half-shekel.⁴⁰

ונאליעזר רצה לרמוז לרבקה, שאם תנשא ליצחק תהיה לה הזכות של העשרת הדיברות, שעתידים להנמן לישראל בזכות יצחק, שבמידת יצחק ניתנה התורה, כדאמרין בשמעו ישראל מפי הגבורה, ועוד ניתנה באש, ועוד השופר היה של אילו של יצחק, וכדי שלא תאמר רבקה דמה תועלת בנתינת העשרת דיברות אם אחר כך יקלקלו בעגל, או תתפחד פן לא יהיה לישראל תקנה, הואיל שהתורה ניתנה במדת הגבורה והדין משום הכי רמז לה הגזם שהיה משקלו בקע, כמו המחצית השקל דכתיב ביה "בקע לגלגלת" וכי'.

Eliezer wanted to hint to Rebecca that if she would marry Isaac, she would have the merit of the Ten Commandments, which are destined to be given to Israel in the merit of Isaac, as the Torah was given in the merit of Isaac, as it is said that Israel heard it directly from the mouth of the Almighty (see Makkot page 24a), and also, it was given in fire. Also, the blowing of the ram's horn [shofar] at the Revelation of Sinai was that of Isaac,⁴¹ i.e., the ram that was sacrificed in lieu of Isaac.⁴² These hints were given in order that Rebecca would not say, "What use is the giving of the Ten Commandments if afterwards they will sin with the Golden Calf," or be afraid that Israel would have no remedy, since the Torah was given through the attributes of power [*Gevurah*]⁴³ and judgment. Because of this, he hinted to her the ring that weighed a *beka*, like the half-shekel, about which it is written, "a *beka* a head, half a shekel by the sanctuary weight," etc.

ולכן הוציא הגזם ולקח אותו בידו, פלומר אף אם יחטאו ישראל בעגל, מכל מקום יתפטר להם בזה ונגזם כמו שכתבנו לעיל, ולא הגיח אותו על אפה של רבקה כמו שעשה בצמידים, לפי שלא היה מוכרח שישראל יתנו מחצית, דדלמא לא יחטאו ולא יצטרכו למחצית השקל, אמנם כשסיפר הדברים חזר ואמר "ואשם הגזם על-אפה", שלא רצה להגיד להם סוד זה. וזהו שהוכרח רש"י לפרש "גזם זה בקע משקלו" שהוא רמז למחצית השקל.

Therefore, [Eliezer] took out the ring and held it in his hand, as if to say, "Even if Israel will sin with the Golden Calf, in any case it will be atoned for them through the earrings and the ring," as we wrote above. He did not place it on her nose as he did with the bracelets, placing them on her hands, because it was not necessary for Israel to give the half-shekel, as perhaps they would not sin and would not need the half-shekel. However, when he later repeated the words, he said, "And I put the ring on her nose," as he did not want to reveal this esoteric secret. This is why Rashi was compelled to explain "a gold nose-ring weighing a *beka*" was a hint to the half-shekel.

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³⁹ Ex. 30:13.

⁴⁰ Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Tisa, note 10.

⁴¹ Tur, Orach Chaim 417.

⁴² Gen. 22:13.

⁴³ Zohar II:81a (Yitro 286–87).