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WEEKLY PARSHA  
ARCHIVE Q&A

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בלבבי  
משכן  
אבנה

**BILVAVI**

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# PURIM = RECTIFYING THE SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF

The birth and the existence of the Jewish people is based on the event of standing at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, where we uttered “*Naaseh V’Nishmah*”, “We will do and we will hear.” On Purim, there was a renewed acceptance of the Torah. When we stood at Sinai, we were forced to accept the Torah, or else we would die. But on Purim, we accepted the Torah willingly.

The elevation of status we enjoyed at Har Sinai was soon shattered, when we sinned with the golden calf. When we stood at Sinai, we were in a state of revealed G-dliness, and the impurity of the Serpent was removed from us, and we were on a level of Adam before the sin. After the sin with the golden calf, we fell back into the state of sin, and once again were like Adam after the sin. Therefore, on Purim, where we re-accept the Torah, our *avodah* is to find the G-dliness revealed as well as to rectify the sin with the golden calf.

Just as Purim revealed to us a re-acceptance of the Torah, which was at Har Sinai, so is it linked with the sin of the golden calf, which took place after standing at Har Sinai. These events re-occur on Purim, but the order of the events changes.

Whereas standing at Har Sinai was first an acceptance of the Torah and then there was a decree of death upon us (which resulted from the sin of the golden calf), on Purim there was first a decree of death upon us and later there was an acceptance of the Torah.

Since the event of standing at Sinai ended with a decree of death of mankind, Purim continues where that point left off – it begins with a decree of death upon mankind, and it is upon us to return to the renewed acceptance of the Torah that we were awakened to.

Thus, the essence of the day of Purim is essentially a return to the event of standing at Sinai, as well as to the sin of the golden calf; except that the order of these events is turned around.

Now we can understand why Chazal say that in the future, all the festivals will cease, except for Purim<sup>1</sup>. It is because Purim is the light of the future, where the sin of Adam will be rectified. It is the future dimension, which will be world in which there is no sin.

This is also the depth of how “Yom Kippur is like Purim”<sup>2</sup>, implying a connection between Purim and Yom Kippur. When we stood at Har Sinai, it was the month of Sivan, and then the Luchos were broken, and then Moshe went up to Heaven again to receive the Luchos, and he came down with them on Yom Kippur. Thus Yom Kippur rectified the sin with the golden calf. Purim, which begins from the decree of death upon us, is a continuation of the rectification on the sin with the Golden Calf.

<sup>1</sup> *Midrash Shochar Tov: Mishlei 9:1*

<sup>2</sup> *Tikkunei HaZohar 57b (tikkun 21).*

## THE CONCEPT OF "IGUL"

Purim begins with the point we left off with: the sin with the golden calf. The calf, which is “*eigel*” (עֵיגֵל), is from the word “*igul*” (עִיגֵל), which means “round” or “circular.” If we reflect into the events recorded in Megillas Esther, we can keep seeing this concept of *igul*, of circles.

For example, Achashveirosh ruled from Hodu through Kush, and the Gemara says that just as he ruled over the distance between these two countries, so did he rule from one end of the world to the other. What is the proof that he ruled the entire world, just because he ruled over these two countries? It means that he ruled over the entire circle between Hodu and Kush – meaning the entire world. In these words of the Gemara, we see the concept of the *igul*, of circle.

Additionally, the party of Achashveirosh lasted 180 days. The number 180 is equal to the letters “קפח”, from the word הקפה, “inclusive”. This further implies that the agenda of Achashveirosh was to attain a kind of royalty that was circular, all-encompassing, where all the points are included.

In addition, the Midrash<sup>3</sup> states that Achashveirosh took control over the entire world by conquering all of the countries that were outside of the more inner countries, and in this way he gained the inner countries without having to conquer them, because once he had the outer countries, the inner countries were defeated with

<sup>3</sup> *Esther Rabbah* 1:7

them as well. The depth of this is that he overcame the world in a “circular” manner, for by conquering the outer countries, he had circled all over the inner countries.

Another hint to this concept is that the very word “*Megillah*” (מגילה) is rooted in the word *igul* (עיגול). A *Megillah* is rolled out from a scroll, hinting to the “roundness” that it coming to reveal. The story of the *Megillah* reveals the holy kind of *igul* (circle) which counters the *igul* on the side of evil, which was the *eigel* (the sin with the golden calf).

(As is well-known, the original sin of mankind, the *Eitz HaDaas*, bears a similarity to the sin with the *eigel hazahav*, the golden calf. They both brought death to the world. The sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* was the root of all sin, and the sin with the golden calf was its branch.

We can find an allusion to the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* from the story of the *Megillah*, which begins from the point where the sin with the Golden Calf leaves us off at [a decree of death]. For example, after Vashti was called, letters were sent out to all the countries that from now on, “every man shall rule in his home” – the new decree was that man would now “rule” over his wife.

By the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*, woman received the curse that man would rule over her, as a punishment upon her for the sin; but this is not how it was supposed to be, had Chavah never sinned. Another connection between the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* and the story of the *Megillah* is that Achashveirosh requested that Vashti

appear unclothed in front of all the guests. This resembled the sin of Adam and Chavah of being unclothed in front of the Serpent, which aroused its jealousy and caused him to want to kill Adam and take Chavah for a wife.)

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### "IGUL" IN THE SIDE OF HOLINESS AND IN THE SIDE OF EVIL

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Let us see more about the concept of *igul* circle.

The Gemara says that if a man is unmarried, he is missing a protective wall<sup>4</sup>, for woman's task is to "surround" man [and thereby protect him from sin], for it is written, "*Woman surrounds man*".<sup>5</sup> The miracle of Purim was thus brought about by a woman, for a woman is a "wall".

In the story of Purim, there was an *igul* (circle) on the side of holiness pitted against the *igul* on the side of impurity [as we will soon explain]. The unholy kind of *igul*, as we explained above, is represented by the party of Achashveirosh.

The Gemara<sup>6</sup> says that when Esther entered the court of Achashveirosh, as soon as she encountered the idols there, the *Shechinah* left her, and she said, "*My G-d, my G-d, why do you abandon me?*" She lost her connection to the *Shechinah*, and she faced a difficulty. This was the same kind of difficulty that the Jewish people as a whole were going through before the sin with the Calf, when they

<sup>4</sup> Yevamos 62b

<sup>5</sup> Yirmiyahu 31:21

<sup>6</sup> Megillah 15b

were feeling abandoned by Hashem, thinking that they lost Moshe. On a deeper note, not only was Moshe their leader and the one who took them out of Egypt who performed much miracles for them, but he was also the bridge that connects the Jewish people and their Father in heaven.

When *Klal Yisrael* thought that their connection to Hashem via Moshe *Rabbeinu* was lost, they sought a different means of connection to Hashem. Through Moshe, their bond with Hashem had been through *da'as*, for Moshe represents *da'as*. There are three kinds of *da'as*; one of the abilities of *da'as* is that it can differentiate and decide between two possibilities. Thus a person's *da'as* considers the possibilities.

When *Klal Yisrael* thought that their connection to Hashem through *da'as* was now lost, they sought a different kind of connection to Hashem, which does not consider other possibilities. They sought a kind of relationship with Hashem that is *igul*, "circular" - which has no "sides" to it.

But that is where they fell, for they did not reach the holy kind of *igul*, and instead they fell into a kind of "igul" that was impure – the "eigel".

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK-

פוריים 006 - ענין העיגול בפורים - ספר מועדי השנה

## CLOSENESS & LOYALTY TO HASHEM QUESTION:

I have a couple of questions which have been bothering me for many long years, since my childhood.... The Jewish nation stood at Har Sinai, and later sinned with the Eigel (*golden calf*). Is this story in the Torah emphasizing that no matter high one's "spiritual feelings" are, this is not what determines true "closeness" to Hashem?

## ANSWER:

Of all people it is said, "Do not be confident in yourself until the day of your death". Of Hashem it is said, "Even in His holiest ones He is not confident in." For as long as a person is on This World he is in a test, from the front and behind, as the Mesillas Yesharim states. Only in the Next World where the evil inclination will be swallowed will one permanently retain his spiritual level, for there will be no possibility then of any spiritual descent.

The avodah (*task*) of a person is to be loyal to Hashem at all times, whether he feels the Creator or not. In the future, one will feel the Creator constantly. One can have a semblance of this experience on This World, and partially feel the Creator, each person at his own level, to the degree that one has revealed the light of the soul.

Therefore, as long as one is on This World, where one is a soul living within a body, there is a concealment [of the light of the neshamah], it is one's task to accept the yoke of Heaven upon himself, in the areas of action, emotion, speech, thought, and will. Simultaneously, a person should also penetrate to the light of his neshamah and feel the closeness to Hashem. But one needs both, accepting the yoke of Heaven, along with pleasure [in doing the *mitzvos*]. It is incomplete when a person does either of the above. One needs both aspects, together, for each of the above aspects by itself is only half of one's task, which only endangers a person – as you have pointed out partially in your question.