



The Conservative Kehila in Zichron Ya'acov

Parashat Ki Tissah: The Golden Calf and the 9th of April

Dear Friends,

We have returned to the parasha of the Golden Calf.

Truthfully, I don't remember having left it.

It is alive and kicking within us.

The Golden Calf is everything that is not real, everything that is fake.

But what is real? And, for that matter, what isn't?

(Sh'mot 32:1) **“When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, the people gathered against Aaron and said to him, ‘Come, make us a god who shall go before us, for that man Moses, who brought us from the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him.’”**

Everything here is distorted! The people know that Moshe is “just” a man and not God - they say so explicitly - but still they are sure that he has powers, and that it is he who took them out of Egypt, as it were...

They are not stupid! Unless we all are. Do we not also expect our leaders to perform wonders and miracles? To bring peace, win all wars (preferably immediately, so that there are no casualties - not ours and not theirs), lower the cost of housing, provide enough hospital beds, eradicate corruption, force the ultra-orthodox to serve in the army and not ask for gender separation, and make the level of the Kinneret rise...

Is this not why we are all going out to vote on April 9th?

Deep within us, we are all waiting for the Messiah. This is why, on April 10 and beyond, we will all be disappointed. Definitely.

Nothing has changed. The people are seeking a god, just as we do!

Although the reason is unclear, Aharon consents:

(2) **Aaron said to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”**

There are those who claim that he was trying to gain time until Moshe returns. But it didn't work. The people dismantled the gold faster than anticipated, and brought all of that glitter to Aharon. (4) **“This he took from them and cast in a mold, and made it into a molten calf.”**

Aharon himself makes the Golden Calf!

Even though this seems quite shocking, he did not do anything wrong. The Golden Calf is not in itself wrong. It is simply a work of art. If we do not attribute any special powers to it, it is not objectionable.

But the people - just as confused as we are - do not miss the opportunity for some idol worship: **“And they exclaimed, “This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!”**

Aharon sees what has happened and tries to rescue the situation:

(5) **“When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron announced: ‘Tomorrow shall be a festival of the LORD!’”**

The festival is not for the calf, Aharon declares, but for God. It is as if he is saying “Idiots, this is not the real thing; neither is Moshe. Celebrate? Definitely! But the festival is for God, for the true “thing.”

This is so accurate!

But the people - just like us - do not notice the precision: a festival for God, a festival for the golden calf, what does it matter? The main thing is that we have something to hold on to! We have something (or someone) to put our hopes onto - he will bring peace, security, welfare, health, improved train systems, and housing for young couples.

But what or who is the true thing?

In other words, which slip of paper should we put in the ballot box on April 9th???

There is not and never has been a flesh and blood leader who can change the order of the world. Physical reality **in its essence** is such that:

1. We will always feel a deficiency. Always! (see Maslow's pyramid of needs)
2. We will always look for someone or something which will give us the illusion that it is possible to satisfy that sense of deficiency. Always.
3. When we find that thing or that person, we will always project our hopes, expectations, and desires on it or them.
4. We will always be disappointed! Because there is no thing or person who can fulfill our sense of deficiency. Ever. In the end we will always be disappointed.

The only true "thing" is...

God!

I apologize if you expected a different answer.

And no, He is not the old man with the white beard and the white robe who sits on a cloud, "on a mighty and exalted throne" ("our father in the heavens").

The true thing - the one that takes us out of Egypt every day anew - is within us. It is within everything, flows through everything and gives it life. There is nothing without Him, nothing but Him. He does not have a shape or a figure, otherwise He would be a golden calf.

The closest we can get to a description of Him is the one given to Moshe at the Burning Bush. Moshe asks God, when the Children of Israel ask me who sent me, what should I say to them (or, in other words, who are you?), he receives a wonderful reply: (Sh'mot 3:14) "Thus shall you say to the Israelites, 'Ehyeh sent me to you.'"

"Ehyeh" is apparently the most precise name for the Creator.

"Ehyeh" is the great secret of Creation.

"Eheye" means, "Will Become".

"Ehyeh" is the power of materialization from the formless to the form. It is the power for fulfillment, actualizing all potential.

"Ehyeh" is **"not in the heavens...or over the seas...it is very close to you... It is in your heart..."** (D'varim 30:12-14). Although the context of this verse is different, the meaning remains relevant.

On the 9th of April each one of us will put their choice in the ballot box, which represents the leader they feel will do the best job in the best and most honest way.

But... anyone who thinks that the leader they chose will keep his election promises and solve all of our problems has placed a golden calf into the ballot box.

The 9th of April is a festival. We even have a day off work to celebrate it. So go out and celebrate!

Just remember, this is a festival of "Eheye."

Whatever the election results are, "Eheye" will always be the only winner. He is the one true thing.

Everything and everyone else - Binyamin, Benny, Yair, Bogy, Avi, Gideon, Ahmad, Ayman, Naftali, and Ayelet - are only humble representatives of Eheye on earth, just as we all are. No one is the true thing!

On second thought... don't wait for April 9th. Go out and celebrate today! Because it is always God's festival.

Shabbat Shalom,

Elisha