

because of them (Ber. 32).	} בְּשִׁבְלֵם (בְּרָכְלִי לִיב);	Go, get thee down	לְדַרְדֹּר.
At that moment		בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה	מִגֹּדְלָתָהּ.
Moses was banished	נִתְנַדְּהָ מִשָּׁעָה	} I have given thee high office only	לֹא נָתַתִּי לָהּ גֹּדְלָהּ
by a decree of the heavenly court (Tanhuma).	מִפִּי בֵּית־דִּין שָׁל מַעֲלָה (תַּנְחֻמָּה);		אֶלָּא

(1)

ג' כ"ו
כ"ו
כ"ו

2) "וידבר ה' אל משה לך רד, מאי לך רד? אמר רבי אלעזר, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה, רד מגודלתך! פלוג נתימי לך גדולה אלא בשביל ישראל, ועבשיו ישראל חטאו - אהה לפה לי? מיך תשש בוחו של משה, ולא היה לו פה לדבר. וכיון שאמר: "הרף מפני ואשמידם", אמר משה: דבר זה תלוי בי - מיך עמד ונתתק בתפלה ובקש רחמים.

The Gemara elaborates upon additional aspects of the sin of the Golden Calf. It is stated: "And the Lord said to Moses: Go and descend, for your people whom you have lifted out of the land of Egypt have been corrupted" (Exodus 32:7). What is the meaning of "go and descend"? Rabbi Elazar said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: Moses, descend from your greatness.¹¹ Isn't it only for the sake of Israel, so that you may serve as an emissary, that I granted you prominence; and now that Israel has sinned, why do I need you? There is no need for an emissary. Immediately, Moses' strength waned and he was powerless to speak in defense of Israel. And once God said to Moses: "Leave Me be, that I may destroy them" (Deuteronomy 9:19), Moses said to himself: If God is telling me to let Him be, it must be because this matter is dependent upon me. Immediately Moses stood and was strengthened in prayer, and asked that God have mercy on the nation of Israel and forgive them for their transgression.

3) משל, למלך שבעס על בנו והיה מכהו מכה גדולה, והיה אוהבו יושב לפניו ומחירא לומר לו דבר. אמר המלך: אלמלא אוהבי זה שישב לפני הרגתי! אמר: דבר זה תלוי בי - מיך עמד והצילו.

The Gemara says: This is comparable to a king who became angry at his son who had sinned against him, and beat him, administering a severe beating. At that moment, a well-wisher of the king was sitting before him and witnessed the entire event, and was afraid to say anything to the king about the excessive beating. Meanwhile, the king said to his son: Were it not for this well-wisher of mine who is sitting before me, I would have killed you. Upon hearing this, the king's friend said to himself: This is clearly a sign that this matter, rescuing the son from the hands of his father, is dependent upon me. Immediately he stood and rescued him from the king.

Gemara in Berakhot:

4) אמר ר' אבהו אלמלא מקרא כתוב א"א לאומרו. מלמד שתפסו משה להקב"ה כאדם שהוא תופס את תבירו בבגדו ואמר לפניו רבש"ע אין אני מניחך עד שתמחול ותסלח להם.

R. Abahu said: Were this verse not written in the Torah, it would be impossible to assert. This teaches that Moses seized the Holy One Blessed Is He like a person who seizes his friend by the garment and says before him: "Master of the Universe, I shall not release You until You forgive and pardon them."

God now presents Moses with a test of leadership. Is Moses a leader only when miracles are at his disposal, when God commands "lift your hand over the sea" to split it? Or can he also display leadership when God threatens to destroy the people? If Moses indeed "leaves God alone," if he does not defend the people, if he only desires to continue the earlier, facile type of leadership, then, indeed: "My anger will burn, and I will destroy them." Under these circumstances, Moses is no leader at all, in contrast to Abraham who even attempted to defend the evil city of Sodom from annihilation. If Moses cannot argue on behalf of the people, if he cannot sacrifice on their behalf, then his leadership is gone.

from mount Sinai **מִהַר סִינַי**
 with the two tables of the testimony in Moses' hand, **וּשְׁנֵי לְחֹת הַתְּעֻדָה בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה**
 when he came down **בְּרִדְתּוֹ**
 from the mount, **מִן-הַהָר**
 that Moses knew not **וּמֹשֶׁה לֹא-יָדָע**
 that the skin of his face sent forth beams } **כִּי קָמוּ עוֹר פָּנָיו**
 while He talked with him. **בְּדַבְּרוֹ אִתּוֹ:**
 30. And (when) Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, **30 וַיֵּרֶא אַהֲרֹן וְכָל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-מֹשֶׁה**
 behold, the skin of his face sent forth beams; } **וַהֲנִיחַ קָמוּ עוֹר פָּנָיו**
 and they were afraid **וַיִּירָאוּ**
 to come nigh him. **מִן-נֶשֶׁת אֵלָיו:**

29. And it came to pass, when Moses came down **29 וַיֵּרֵד בְּרִדְת מֹשֶׁה**

The sages say that when the Master of the Universe promises something good he never retracts it. God offered Moshe the fatherhood of a great nation; how was this promise fulfilled? The entire congregation of Israel became Moshe's nation. Torah laws are considered *Halacha l'Moshe miSinai*, and a marriage ceremony is completed, according to the Law of Moshe and Israel." Because he was ready to sacrifice everything on behalf of the nation, the entire Torah is *Torat Moshe*. (*Derashot HaRav*, Lusitger, p.92)

R. Chaim Volozhin
(1749 - 1821)

נפש החיים

וזה שכתב בסמות וזה בפרשת ירא "אֵלֶיךָ אָבִיר וְלִמְשָׁחֵךָ אֶת-יְהוָה כִּסֵּם טַעֲמֵיךָ" עֲזָרוּ כִּי הָיִיתָ אֵת כִּי הַשְׁמַדָּה אֵלֶיךָ לֹא מִשָּׁחֵךְ אֶת הַתְּעֻדָה וְיֵרֶךְ כִּסֵּם טַעֲמֵיךָ רַחֵם פִּי הַשְׁמַדָּה וְכֹחַ עֲזָרוֹ כִּי אֵלֶיךָ אֶת הַיָּמִים קִדְּשׁ עִם הַשְׁמַדָּה פִּי כִּסֵּם וְלֹא פִּי עֲזָרוֹ וְכִסֵּם לַמְּבִינִים עֲזָרוֹ מִן שְׁמֵיב הַרְחֵם וְקִדְּשׁ לְכַנְּסָה כִּסֵּם הַמְּלָאכִים. כִּפְרוּשׁ מֵאֲמָרָם וְכִרְוֹם לְכַנְּסָה (שְׁמוֹרָה ב) "אֲבָרְתֶם אֲבָרְתֶם, אֵלֶיךָ וְאֵלֶיךָ, כִּסֵּם טַעֲמֵיךָ, וְלִמְשָׁחֵךָ לֹא כִּסֵּם טַעֲמֵיךָ" שֶׁהוּא עַל עֲזָרוֹ הַפֶּסֶק וְהַצִּיָּה מִשְׁמַת מַעֲזָנוּ הַגּוֹף, עֲזָרוֹ שָׁם:

On one hand, a passage in *Sanhedrin* 111a⁵ contrasts Moses unfavorably to the forefathers. After Moses' initial approach to Pharaoh on Israel's behalf only resulted in greater oppression of Israel, Moses complained to God and demanded to know why he was sent on this failed mission. God responded:

1)

חבל על דאבדין ולא משתכחין! הרי כמה פעמים נגליתני על אברהם יצחק ויעקב בקל שקי ולא הרחרו אחר מדותי. אמרתי לאברהם 'קום התהלך בארץ לארצה ולרחבה כי לך אתננה, בקש מקום לקבור את שרה ולא מצא עד שקנה בארבע מאות שקל כסף ולא הרחרו אחר מדותי. אמרתי ליצחק 'גור בארץ הזאת ואהיה עמך ואברכך' בקשו עבדיו מים לשתות ולא מצאו עד שעשו מריבה... ולא הרחרו אחר מדותי. אמרתי ליעקב 'הארץ אשר אתה שוכב עליה לך אתננה' ביקש מקום לנטוע אהלו ולא מצא עד שקנה במאה קשיטה ולא הרחרו אחר מדותי.

Alas for those gone and no longer to be found [i.e. I miss the patriarchs, whose like is no longer to be found!] On a number of occasions I revealed Myself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who never questioned My ways. [For example, although] I said to Abraham: "Arise and walk the length and breadth of the land, for I shall give it to you,"⁶ he had to search for a place to bury Sarah and could not find one until he was willing to buy [a plot of land] for [the exorbitant price of] 400 silver shekels.⁷ [Still] he did not question My ways.

2) It seems from this passage that God placed the forefathers on a higher plane than Moses. To further support this position, consider that in our daily prayers we invoke the forefathers, as we pray to: אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." We do not pray to אלקי משה, the God of Moses. In fact, *Hazal* say that it is forbidden to invoke more than the three forefathers in the first blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei* (*Berakhot* 16b).

The Rambam continues:

3)

ובן ארבעים שנה הכיר אברהם את בוראו כיון שהכיר וידע התחיל להשיב תשובות על בני אור כשדים ולערוך דין עמהם ולומר שלא זו דרך האמת

He was forty years of age when Abraham recognized his Creator. Once he understood, he started to raise questions to the population of Ur Kasdim, and to arrange debates with them and say that their path was not correct.

4)

פסוק ז: וידבר ה' אל משה לך רד כי שחת עמך אשר העלית מארץ מצרים.
פסוק ח: סרו מהר מן הדרך אשר צויתים עשו להם עגל מסכה וישתחוו לו ויזבחו לו ויאמרו אלה אלהיך ישראל אשר העלך מארץ מצרים.
פסוק ט: ויאמר ה' אל משה ראיתי העם הזה והנה עם קשה עורף הוא.
פסוק י: ואתה הניחה לי ויחר אפי בם ואכלם ואעשה אותך לגוי גדול.

Verse 7: And Hashem spoke (vayedaber) to Moses, saying: "Go, descend, for your nation that you brought up out of Egypt has become corrupt.

Verse 8: They have strayed quickly from the way that I have commanded them. They have made a molten calf, bowed to it, and sacrificed to it, and they said, This is your god, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt."

Verse 9: And Hashem said (vayomer) to Moses: "I have seen this nation, and behold it is a stubborn nation.

Verse 10: And now, leave Me be. Let My anger flare up against them and I will annihilate them and I shall make you a great nation."