

Since all aspects of the Torah are extremely precise, it follows that the comparison between ... the translation of the Torah for King Ptolemy and the day when Hillel was submissive to Shammai—to the day on which the Golden Calf was made is not merely the fact that this day could have brought about an undesirable matter or event (like the result that ensued from the day on which the Golden Calf was made). Instead, there must be a thematic association between these events the day the Golden Calf was made and the sin of the Golden Calf as a whole.¹

To explain: As is well known and explained at length by the commentaries on the Torah, when the Jews asked Aharon to make the Golden Calf, **they did not demand to serve a false deity**, Heaven forbid. They thought Moshe had died and they merely desired a leader who would guide them instead of him; **they were not thinking of abandoning G-d**. This is reflected by their complaint, **"Make us a deity that will go before us, because this man Moshe, who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him."**

In other words, **the Jews wanted an intermediary between G-d and themselves**. Seemingly, **this pattern had been established by G-d Himself**. To all appearances, it was "this man Moshe" acting as an intermediary between G-d and the Jewish people, "who brought us up from the land of Egypt." **They did not see the Exodus as the direct handiwork of G-d Himself without an intermediary.**

There is a place for such an intermediary. G-d desired that a Jew exist on this material plane and yet be connected to G-d, serving Him with all the powers of his soul—including with his mind and with his emotions. This is possible only when G-dliness is drawn down, as it were, to this physical plane to the degree that enables one **"to know that G-d exists"** G-d's intent is that man understand G-dliness, and not only believe that He exists. Belief relates to the level of G-dliness, where He exists unto Himself, simple and undefined in an absolutely singular manner. **Man can relate to this level only through faith; there is no way he can grasp it with his conscious mind.** However, G-d desired that man labor to comprehend G-d, not merely relate to Him through belief.

Moshe served as a paradigm for this approach. He demonstrated that G-dliness could be revealed to a man as he exists in this physical world, **a soul within a body**, and to be en clothed within his mind in "a wondrous unity,"⁽⁵¹⁾ enabling him to reach a level comparable to Moshe himself, "a

man of G-d,"⁽⁵²⁾ a man who we could see and hear, and yet who communicated G-d's word. **Moshe made it possible for others to emulate—to whatever degree possible for them—his relationship with G-d.** The mistake of those who fashioned the Golden Calf was that they thought that for G-dliness to be drawn down and become internalized even further into this world, in a material entity, in all of its dimensions, it was necessary that an even lower entity in this world serve as an intermediary, so that thereby G-dliness would affect this world to an even greater extent.⁽⁵³⁾

To cite a somewhat similar motif: Afterwards, G-d commanded the Jewish people, "Make a Sanctuary for Me" from gold and silver and other physical materials, and promised, "I will dwell within them (the Jewish people)" (Exo 25:8). The fundamental elements of the Sanctuary were the Ark of the Covenant and its two cherubs. Through them, the Divine Presence dwelled among the Jewish people as reflected in the verse (Exo 25:22), "I will speak to you from upon the covering [of the Ark,] from between the two cherubs that are on the Ark of Testimony."

It is possible to say that the above correlates with the interpretation given in the Midrash, that the sin of the Golden Calf came about because at the time of the Giving of the Torah, when "G-d descended on Mount Sinai" (Exo 19:20), He descended with His Heavenly chariot. The Jews saw the Heavenly beings that pull the chariot and they detached the image of one of them, **the angel with the face of an ox, conceiving of it as a separate entity and making the Golden Calf in its image**. Since they existed on the physical plane, they wanted an object from the physical plane that would serve a function down here that is similar to its function in the spiritual realms above, where it is an element of G-d's chariot. They wanted the Golden Calf they made to be a conduit for revealing G-dliness in the physical realm, emulating the face of an ox that pulled the G-dly chariot in the spiritual realms above.

Even after the Golden Calf was made, before it was worshiped, Aharon said, "There will be a festival for G-d tomorrow." He intended that this would lead to an ascent—that Moshe would come and it would become evident that the Golden Calf was of no import. Simply put, **had Satan not incited the Jews, causing them to awake early to sin and worship the Golden Calf** (Exo 32:6) **they would not have sinned**. On the contrary, Moshe would have returned and burned the Golden Calf in the presence of and with the agreement of the entire Jewish people. Certainly, they would not have worshiped it. The utter rejection of the Golden Calf would have expressed the unity of G-d to an even greater degree, reveal-

1 Rabbis Eliyahu Touger and Sholom Ber Wineberg, Trans., *Selections from Likkutei Sichos of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson*, (Kehot Publication Society), pp. 26-30.

ing that "there is nothing other than Him that the only intermediary between the Jews and G-d could be Moshe. Since G-d had sent him and made him His messenger to the Jewish people, he served as a *memutze hamechaber*, an "intermediary who connects." In other words, for the intermediary to establish a direct connection between the Jews and G-d, he or it **must be established through G-d's command and not man's initiative**. However, in actual fact, the making of the Golden Calf brought about the consequence that, on the following day, some of the Jewish people committed the sin of idolatry, which is the very opposite of the oneness of G-d.

(51) The main text is borrowing the wording of *Tanya*, ch. 5, which describes the oneness with G-d established through Torah study, "a wondrous unity to which no parallel whatsoever is found."

(52) *Devarim* 33:1; *Tehillim* 90:1.

The implication of the verse is that **Moshe was able to fuse his humanity together with G-dliness**.

(53) To explain their intent in a different way: See *Kuzari*, discourse 1, ch. 97, which states that when it appeared that Moshe was delayed in descending from the mountain, "the people began looking for an entity that they could serve which was perceptible."

1. *They thought Moshe had died and they merely desired a leader who would guide them instead of him; they were not thinking of abandoning G-d. This is reflected by their complaint, "Make us a deity that will go before us, because this man Moshe, who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him."*

In other words, the Jews wanted an intermediary between G-d and themselves. Seemingly, this pattern had been established by G-d Himself. To all appearances, it was "this man Moshe" acting as an intermediary between G-d and the Jewish people, "who brought us up from the land of Egypt." They did not see the Exodus as the direct handiwork of G-d Himself without an intermediary.

a. Exodus 19:3-6

³Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what **you are to say to the descendants of Jacob** and **what you are to tell the people of Israel**. "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, **"you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."** These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

b. Exodus 20:18-20 (cf., *Deu* 5:23-27)

¹⁸When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the (*shofar*) and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹and said to Moses, "**Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.**" ²⁰Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

c. 1Samuel 8:4-5

⁴So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; **now appoint a king to lead us**, such as all the other nations have."

d. Job 9:30-35

³⁰Even if I washed myself with soap and my hands with cleansing powder, ³¹you would plunge me into a slime pit so that even my clothes would detest me. ³²"He is not a mere mortal like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. ³³**If only there were someone to mediate between us, someone to bring us together, ³⁴someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more.** ³⁵Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot.

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e. Numbers 12:8

⁸With (Moses) I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; **he sees THE FORM of the LORD**. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

1) What is the "form" of the LORD?

פֶּה אֶל־פֶּה אֲדַבֵּר־בוּ וּמַרְאֶה וְלֹא בַחֲדִידַת וְתִמְנַת יְהוָה יִבִּיט

(*Peh el peh a'daber bo u-mareh v'lo v'hi-dot ut-munat haShem yavit*)

Lit., mouth unto mouth I speak with him, and by an appearance, and not in riddles; and **the form (or likeness) of HaShem** he beholds attentively ...

2) This passage contrasts Moses with other prophets who receive visions and dreams, while Moses sees God's "form" (or "likeness" תְּמוּנָה [*t'munah*]) directly.²

However, this seems to contradict Exodus 33:20, where God tells Moses "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live," and verse 23 where Moses only sees God's "back."

Rashi—Interprets *temunah* as a "clear vision" **rather than a physical form**, meaning Moses understood divine communications with perfect clarity.

Maimonides (Guide for the Perplexed)—Argues this refers to Moses' superior intellectual apprehension of divine truth, **not physical sight**.

Talmud, Berakhot 7a—Suggests Moses saw the "knot of God's tefillin," a metaphorical way of saying he glimpsed divine glory in a unique way.

Some interpret *temunah* as "likeness" or "representation" - perhaps **referring to the divine glory (kavod) rather than God's essence**.

Others see this as describing Moses' unique prophetic clarity—he received direct, unambiguous divine communication unlike other prophets who received symbolic visions.

The tension between this verse and God's invisibility remains a central interpretive challenge, generally resolved by understanding it as referring to Moses' unparalleled prophetic clarity **rather than literal physical sight**.

3) Colossians 1:15

¹⁵**The Son is the image** (צֶלֶם [*tzelem*]) (or representation) **of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation.

4) Philippians 2:5-8

⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Messiah Yeshua: ⁶Who, **being in very nature (or form of) God**, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being **made in human likeness**. ⁸And **being found in appearance as a man**, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

5) The Hebrew word "*t'munah*" (תְּמוּנָה) means **form, likeness, representation, or image**. It denotes an external shape or representation perceived by the eye or reproduced by human hands. In biblical contexts, it often refers to the **likeness of God**, as seen in Exodus 20:4, where it prohibits making an idol in any form. The term is used to signify both tangible images and intangible representations, reflecting a rich theological concept in the Hebrew Bible.

6) The Hebrew word "*tzelem*" (צֶלֶם) means **"image" or "likeness."** It is often used in biblical contexts to describe the creation of man

in God's image (Genesis 1:26) and can also refer to idols or representations. The term has both literal and metaphorical meanings, reflecting both the tangible and spiritual aspects of creation and representation in the Hebrew Bible.

7) In modern Hebrew *t'munah* means "image" in the sense of a "picture" or a "painting." *Tzelem* is the modern Hebrew word for a "photographer" or "cameraman."

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f. 1Timothy 2:1-6 (CJB)

¹First of all, then, I counsel that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all human beings, ²including kings and all in positions of prominence; so that we may lead quiet and peaceful lives, being godly and upright in everything. ³This is what God, our Deliverer, regards as good; this is what meets his approval. ⁴He wants all humanity to be delivered and come to full knowledge of the truth. ⁵For **God is one; and there is but one Mediator between God and humanity, Yeshua the Messiah, himself human**, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom on behalf of all, thus providing testimony to God's purpose at just the right time.

g. Hebrews 9:15 (CJB)

¹⁵It is because of this death that **(Yeshua) is mediator of a new covenant** ... Because a death has occurred which sets people free from the transgressions committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

2. *G-d's intent is that man understand G-dliness, and not only believe that He exists. Belief relates to the level of G-dliness, where He exists unto Himself, simple and undefined in an absolutely singular manner. Man can relate to this level only through faith; there is no way he can grasp it with his conscious mind. However, G-d desired that man labor to comprehend G-d, not merely relate to Him through belief.*

a. James 2:19

¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

- 1) Obviously, a "belief" (i.e., a "strong intellectual conviction") in God is NOT enough.
- 2) We "relate" to God by doing what He has called us to do—to "walk in His ways" (Isa 2:4; Dan 4:37; Mic 4:2) and "seeing" the effect of it, not only in our own lives, but in the lives of those who we interact with.
- 3) In Hebrew "faith" in God is NOT a "strong intellectual conviction" but a trusting faithfulness—doing what God has called us to do even when we don't completely understand it all.

4) We cannot grasp the nature of God and His purposes with our “conscious mind.”

a) Deuteronomy 29:29

²⁹The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

b) Isaiah 55:8-9

⁸“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. ⁹“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

c) Romans 11:33

³³Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

3. *Moshe served as a paradigm for this approach. He demonstrated that G-dliness could be revealed to a man as he exists in this physical world, a soul within a body, and to be enclothed within his mind in “a wondrous unity,” enabling him to reach a level comparable to Moshe himself, “a man of G-d,” a man who we could see and hear, and yet who communicated G-d’s word.*

a. Numbers 12:3

³Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth.

—His humility made him receptive to divine communication.

—Moses consistently deflected glory to God and sought nothing for himself, making him a clear channel for divine will.³

b. Moses regularly interceded for others, especially when God’s anger was kindled against Israel (Exo 32:11-14, Num 14:13-19).

—He demonstrates that intimate relationship with God involves advocating for others, not just personal benefit.

c. Moses wasn’t passive—he questioned God’s commands (Exo 3:11, 4:1), argued for the people’s welfare, and even challenged divine decisions.

—This shows that authentic relationship includes honest dialogue, not mere submission.

d. Moses remained loyal through 40 years of wilderness complaints, rebellions, and personal disappointments.

—His constancy demonstrates that relationship with God requires perseverance through difficulties.

e. Exodus 33:11

¹¹The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.

—This intimate communication came through regular, consistent engagement with God.

f. Moses’ relationship with God was always oriented toward serving others, never purely personal spiritual advancement.

—**The Moses paradigm shows that divine relationship requires humility, persistence, honesty, faithfulness, and service to others.**

4. *Simply put, had Satan not incited the Jews, causing them to awake early to sin and worship the Golden Calf (Exo 32:6) they would not have sinned.*

a. 1Chronicles 21:1-6

¹**Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.** ²So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, “Go and count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan. Then report back to me so that I may know how many there are.” ³But Joab replied, “May the LORD multiply his troops a hundred times over. My lord the king, are they not all my lord’s subjects? Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?” ⁴The king’s word, however, overruled Joab ... ⁵Joab reported the number of the fighting men to David ... ⁶But Joab did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, because the king’s command was repulsive to him.

1) וַיַּעֲמֵד שָׂטָן עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל (va-ya’mod Satan al-Yisrael ...)

2) This is the only time in the *Tenach* when the “name” Satan is translated as a “proper name,” i.e., *without the definite article*.

3) 1Kings 5:2-4 (cf., 1Ki 11:23, 25)

²Solomon sent back this message to Hiram: ³“You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God ...

⁴But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and **there is no adversary** (אֵין שָׂטָן) or disaster ...

4) 1Kings 11:14

¹⁴Then the LORD raised up against Solomon **an adversary** (שָׂטָן), Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom.

3) Job 1:6-9 (cf., Job 1:7-9, 12; 2:1-4, 6-7; Zec 3:2)

⁶One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and (the) Satan (שָׂטָן) also came with them ...

³ Ibid.

4) Matthew 12:26 (cf.,

^{26f}If **(the) Satan** drives out **(the) Satan**, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?

... וְהַשָּׂטָן אֶם-יִגְרֹשׁ אֶת-הַשָּׂטָן ...

(v'ha-satan im y'garesh et ha-satan ...)

a) καὶ εἰ ὁ σατανᾶς τὸν σατανᾶν ἐκβάλλει (Kai ei o satanas ton satanas ekballei ...)

5) Mark 4:15

¹⁵Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, **(the) Satan** comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.

CJB, MIT, YLT—**the Adversary** comes ...

KJV, NKJ, RSV, NAB, NAS, NIRV, NJB—Satan comes immediately
(or at once) ...

5. *In other words, for the intermediary to establish a direct connection between the Jews and G-d, he or it **must be established through G-d's command and not man's initiative.***

a. Acts 7:35

^{35m}This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' **He was sent** to be their ruler and deliverer **by God himself**, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush.

b. Romans 8:3

³For what the law was powerless to do **because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness** of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh ...

c. Galatians 4:4-5

⁴But when the set time had fully come, **God sent his Son** ... ⁵to redeem those under the (*curse of the*) law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.