

**Shabbat Shalom and Happy 4th of July
from Rabbi Michael Gold**

Candle Lighting Time
Friday Erev Shabbat 8:00 pm

Services

Shabbat Morning July 5 9:30 am

Evelyn and I spent a wonderful few days visiting our oldest son Natan and his girlfriend Elyse in Silver Spring, MD. Travelling is exhausting but when all three of our children live out of state, we do what we have to do.

There is a serious talk about a peace deal in Gaza and the release of the hostages. May it speedily come to pass.

**PARSHAT HUKKAT
THE GOLDEN CALF AND THE RED CALF**

“This is the ritual law that the Lord has commanded: Instruct the Israelite people to bring you a red cow without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which no yoke has been laid.” (Numbers 19:2)

This portion begins with one of the strangest laws in the entire Torah. Most of us are in a state of ritual impurity (*tamei*). We became ritually impure if we have been in contact with a dead body, even being in the same room. To reenter a state of ritual purity (*tahor*) we must use the ashes of a red calf without blemish. When the ancient Temple in Jerusalem was standing, one must be in a state of ritual purity to enter the grounds. And even today the location of the Temple in Jerusalem is off-limits without a purifying ritual.

How can we become ritually pure? Someone must pour onto us the ashes of a red calf, mixed with water and certain plants. The ashes can purify us, but the person who prepares the ashes then becomes ritually impure. The whole ritual is strange. Nonetheless, it became the basis of a television show a few years ago entitled *Dig* about a red cow born in Norway and a murder in Jerusalem. (I will not go into the convoluted plot.)

Why do we require a red calf? Let me present a theory mentioned by the Rabbis. There is a Talmudic principle called *HePeh Sh’Asar Hu HaPeh Sh’Heter*. “The mouth that forbids is the mouth that permits.” (*Mishna Ketubot* 2:5) If a woman comes from out of town and says, “I was married but

now I am divorced,” she is believed. It was her mouth that said she was married which would forbid her from marrying someone else, and that same mouth that says she is divorced which permits her to marry someone else. Whatever originally caused the forbidden state can now bring about the permitted state.

This principle is used by the Rabbis in other cases. For example, suppose one boils non-kosher food in a metal pot. The pot becomes non-kosher and is forbidden for use in a kosher kitchen. How do you make the pot kosher again? You fill it with water and bring it to a boil. Boiling made it forbidden and now boiling makes it permitted. On the other hand, if we fry something non-kosher in a metal pan, the pan becomes not kosher. To make the pan kosher again we need to make it red hot over a flame. Fire made it unkosher and fire makes it kosher.

The Midrash builds on this idea that whatever made something impure must be used to make that thing pure again. They give the example of the child of a handmaiden who dirties the king’s palace. The handmaiden must be brought in to clean it up again. (Numbers Rabbah 19:8) But then the Midrash continues and explains why a calf. “The Holy One said, let the red calf come and atone for the sin of the Golden Calf.” We sinned with a calf, and we need healing with a calf.

But why a red calf? That is a mystery. Maybe because a red calf is so rare. The Torah does not want this atonement to be easy. Today many Orthodox Jews are searching the world for a red calf. If we could find one, we could purify ourselves and perhaps rebuild the ancient Temple. Of course, today there are two mosques on the site of the Holy Temple, and rebuilding the Temple there would start World War III. So it is probably a blessing that we still have not located a red calf.

But there is still a valuable lesson to learn from this strange law. If a calf made us forbidden, so another calf makes us permitted. If one calf leads to impurity, another calf can lead us to purity. Perhaps this is a deep lesson in psychology. We must touch the wounds of our past to find true healing for our future. This was an insight of the great psychoanalyst and student of Freud Karl Jung. We all have a shadow self, built on wounds of our past. We must do what he called “shadow work,” using that shadow to build a healthy personality for the future. Being a good Christian, it is doubtful that Jung knew about the Rabbinic insights of the Golden Calf and the red calf. But if he did know about them, he would have found important insights into his own work.

