

Tilting at Windmills?
or
Recognizing Hashkofos/Lashon that is Avak Shittuf at Best?
An overview of a thirteen year struggle in Hashkofah
Regarding the Rambam's 5th & 12th Ikkarim
“Making the Case”
by
Yonason Noach ben Avraham
Minneapolis, MN

Motzei Shabbos, Parashas Ki Sisa, 5771

Fellow *Yidden*:

Was there ever a more joyous day for *Klal Yisrael* than that first *Shevuos*, the day when HaShem spoke to us all at Mt. Sinai? With the possible exception of the End of Days prophecy (*Zechariah* 14:9) “***And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; on that day the Lord shall be One, and His Name One,***” when at End of Days (*Yishayahu* 2:11, 17) “***...and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day,***” can any *Yid* think of a more glorious day? At Mt. Sinai we heard His Words (*Shemos* 20:2-3) “***I am the Lord your God, Who*** [*“Alone”* (Or HaChayim, *Bereshis* 46:4; *Haggadah Shel Pesach*; et al)] ***has brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.***” What a wondrous day. Yet a mere forty days later ... Can ANY *Yid* think of a more tragic day than that day when, as a nation, we displayed with our thoughts (*hashkofos*), deeds (*halachos*), and words (*lashonos*) a total disregard for His words – the day of the Golden Calf. HaShem told Moshe (*Shemos* 32:7, 8) “***...Go down; for your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves; They have turned aside quickly from the way which I commanded them.***” But it must be remembered that the incident began with words that showed a total misunderstanding of the roles played by HaShem and by His messenger, Moshe, (*Shemos* 32:1) “***Arise, make us gods, which shall go before us; and as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what became of him.***”

Torah teaches us that it is one thing to make a mistake, but entirely another thing to repeat that mistake over and over again. Rashi, (*Bereshis* 6:4, *Devarim* 11:9) tasks us with learning from the mistakes of the previous generations in order to avoid repeating them. In *Hilchos Shabbos*, our Sages have gone so far as to put “fences” around actions that, though entirely kosher, could possibly be misunderstood by a distant viewer of those actions. *Maris Eyin*. This author wonders why *hashkofos* and *lashonos* that even hint (“...the dust of...”) that either Moshe (or the *Mashiach*) had, or will have a greater role in HaShem’s Redemptive Processes than that of His Messengers/meturgemen. While the Sin of the Golden Calf was ultimately given the *din* of *b’shogeg*, Rabbi Yehudah, (*Avos* 4:16) teaches us, “***Take care in learning, for an error in learning is accounted as willful.***”

We just read this past *Shabbos* about the Incident of the Golden Calf (*Shemos* 32). This author’s claim has been (and still is) that the vast majority of *Yidden* have not learned the underlying lesson of the Golden Calf – that it was HaShem “Alone” Who took us out of Egypt, and that He did not accomplish His task “through” His messenger Moshe, but rather “*L’vado*.” The vast majority of *Yidden* have an *hashkofah* (as evidenced by the language they use when discussing the *Geulah* from Egypt and the End Time *Geulah*), that *made* Moshe HaShem’s “partner” (*shittuf*) when He took us out of Egypt, and *makes* the *Mashiach* HaShem’s “partner” (*shittuf*) in the impending ingathering of the *Yidden* from the *galus*. This piece is this author’s attempt to “***make his case***” to *Yidden* who have yet to be convinced either that there is a problem, or (if they do accept that there is a problem) of the severity of the problem.

Let this author be perfectly clear: I am accusing the vast, vast, VAST majority of today's *Yidden* of *shittuf b'shogeg* in their *hashkafos* and *lashonos* regarding Moshe and the *Mashiach*. Please note that I said "**SHITTUF B'SHOGEG.**" It is NOT this author's claim that *Yidden* are "*intentionally*" rebelling against the *kavod* due HaShem, and HaShem Alone. But rather they are unwittingly repeating the *hashkafah sheker* that allowed the Incident of the Golden Calf to happen in the first place. If the reader has even an inkling of understanding of what happen in the *Perek* of the Golden Calf, then he understands that the people were not rebelling against HaShem, but that they merely desired a replacement for HaShem's "partner," Moshe (Sanhedrin 63a). Please note how this Incident need never have happened. When the people said to Aaron (*Shemos* 32:1) "*Arise, make us gods, which shall go before us; and as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what became of him,*" the response should have been simple and immediate – "**Moshe didn't bring us out of Egypt, HaShem did.**" But no one said this, not even Aaron (see Rashi, *Shemos* 32:5). And because no one said this (with the possible exception of Chur [Rashi, *ibid.*]), our nation fell from the exalted status they had attained at Sinai, and – based upon Rashi, *Shemos* 32:34 "...**Now I [HaShem] have listened to you [Moshe] not to destroy them all at once, but always, always, when I take an accounting of their sins, I will also account a little of this sin with the other sins. [Thus] no punishment befalls Israel in which there is not part of the punishment for the sin of the [Golden] Calf** – the vestiges of that sin still effect us today (one does not punish one's children for something they have ceased doing, does He?).

Since no one said it at that time, and since (according to Rashi) it was the *Erev Rav* who instigated the Sin of the Golden Calf, this *Yid*, this ger wishes NOT to follow in either the footsteps of those initial "converts," who instigated, nor the inaction/silence of his adopted countrymen who built and worshipped The Calf. This *Yid* is saying it loud and clear: "***HaShem, and HaShem ALONE took us out of Egypt! Moshe was not His "partner," nor did HaShem perform His Miracles, signs and wonders "through" Moshe. Moshe was merely His spokesperson who neither deserved, nor would accept any credit for the Works of Heaven. And any understanding that is not clear on this, any words that do not make these Torah Truths known to all who might be listening, it tantamount to repeating that dreadful sin, the Sin of the Golden Calf.***"

Reader, please put all of the above claims by author out of your mind, and consider a piece of evidence that demonstrates that his claims of faulty (*b'shogeg*) *hashkafos* and *lashonos* are indeed a part of the vast majority of *Yidden* today:

A daily e-mail Torah Teaching sent out the following offering of Torah:

"In the *beracha* of "*Es Tzemach Dovid*" one should have *kavanna* with the words "*Lishuascha Kivinu Kol Hayom U'mitzapim L'yeshuah*" (for your salvation we hope all day, and we long for the Redemption) to fulfill one's obligation to long for the coming of *Moshiach*, {which is one of the first questions one will be asked by the heavenly court after death}. (*Shulchan Aruch w/Shaaarei Tshuvah* 118:1)"

This author had several objections to this Torah offering. The un-capitalized "y" in "your salvation" could leave the impression on the reader that the redemption we are longing for is that of the *Mashiach*, rather than that of HaShem. But the real problem I had was the "reading into the text" of the *Mashiach*, when he is not the "bringer" of the "salvation" referred to in the text. Let's look at the proper translations of the *Sha'arei T'shuvah*, the *Gemara* upon which it is based, as well as the *B'rachah* in the *Shemoneh Esrei*:

Sha'arei T'shuvah 118:1 reads, "... And when he says "*Lishuascha Kivinu...*" ("For Your salvation we hoped..."), he should have intention for what they ask him after he dies, "Did you look for (hope for) salvation?" And therefore have intention that you should be one of the ones who hoped for His [HaShem's] salvation."

Shabbos 31a reads, "...Raba said, When man is led in for Judgment [*In the next world.*] he is asked, Did you deal faithfully [i.e., with integrity], did you fix times for learning, did you engage in procreation, did you hope for salvation, did you engage in the dialectics of wisdom, did you understand one thing from another. Yet even so, if 'the fear of the Lord is his treasure,' it is well: if not, [it is] not [well]."

Shemoneh Esrei B'rachah concerning the Davidic Reign reads, "The offspring of Your servant Davis may You speedily cause to flourish, and enhance his pride through Your [HaShem's] salvation, for we hope for Your [HaShem's] salvation all day long. Blessed are You HaShem, Who causes the pride of salvation to flourish."

From these three sources we can clearly see that the Salvation we are to long for is HaShem's Salvation, and it will be HaShem Who will CAUSE all of these things to happen. (This fact, that the salvation is HaShem's, permeates the *Siddur*.)

This author approached a learned Jew of some stature and notability with the above e-mail Torah offering, expressing concern with reading the *Mashiach* into a text. With the exception of agreeing with this author that the "y" in "your" should have been capitalized (to emphasize that Salvation comes from HaShem), this learned Jew had no other problems with the Torah offering as he stated, "**HaShem will redeem us through the *Mashiach*, right?**" This learned *Yid* was saying, "*Lo Kashya*," this is not a problem, as HaShem works "through" His messengers. Now, dear reader, do you agree with the justifying apologetic that "HaShem will redeem us through the *Mashiach*," because if you do, then – unfortunately – this author's point regarding *hashkafah* has been adequately presented and verified, and he has thus far failed miserably in his attempt to correct an easily correctable *hashkafah*.

If the reader is going to agree with the "learned *Yid*," then this author has thus far failed to make his case that any thoughts or words that do not make it clear that HaShem acts ALONE (*L'vado*), and not "through" or "in conjunction with" any of his "*meturgemen*," is to fail to sanctify Him. Thoughts or words that leave room for an understanding that HaShem performs His miracles, signs and wonders "through" His "messengers" is evidence that the thinker/speaker does not fully understand the word "*l'vado*" (cf. Rambam's 5th Ikkar; cf. "...*oseh nifla'os l'vado* [Who *alone* does wonders,]" said daily after *Tehillim* 150; cf. *Tehillim* 136:4 "To Him Who *alone* [*l'vado*] does great wonders..." recited every Shabbos and Yom Tov in *Pesukei D'Zimrah*). Thoughts or words that leave room for an understanding that HaShem gives power to His "messengers" so that they may perform His miracles, signs and wonders is evidence that the thinker/speaker does not understand the concept of *shittuf* (making a "partner" with HaShem) [cf. Rashi, *Bamidbar* 21:5 "**they equated the servant with his Master**" [with mere words!]; cf. Sanhedrin 63a "R. Simeon b. Yochai remarked, '**But whoever associates the Heavenly Name with anything else [as co-deities] is eradicated from the world;**'" cf. Rav Nosson Scherman (Art Scroll's *Stone Chumash*), *Shemos* 32:1].

In Sanhedrin 63a we are taught about the concept of *shittuf*, or making "partners" with HaShem, and how, according to Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, if one transgresses this concept, that one deserves to be removed from this world. HaShem was about to do this very thing – remove the nation from before Him (*Shemos* 32:10). But Moshe talked HaShem out of destroying His people whom He had brought out of

Egypt (*Shemos* 32:11). And then, just a few *passukim* later (*Shemos* 32:31) we read a Rashi (based upon *B'rachos* 32a) where Moshe accuses HaShem of setting his people up for failure. **“It was You Who caused them [to sin],”** Rashi explains, **“for You lavished upon them gold and whatever they desired. What should they have done so as not to sin? [This may be illustrated by] a parable of a king who gave his son to eat and drink, dressed him up, hung a coin purse on his neck, and stationed him at the entrance of a brothel. What can the son do so as not to sin?”**

This author believes that one possible understanding of what Moshe was alluding to was that it was HaShem's fault that they saw him (Moshe) as HaShem's "partner" in His bringing them out of Egypt. HaShem made the decision to send Moshe to Pharaoh, rather than just making Himself palpable to *Pharaoh* (cf. Avimelech, *Bereshis* 20:3-7) and demand that Pharaoh let His people go. It was HaShem Who had Moshe as His spokesperson when the plagues were enacted, and it was HaShem Who had Moshe raise his hand when His Hand parted the Sea of Reeds. No wonder, Moshe was alluding to, that the people viewed Moshe as an integral part of the narrative, rather than as merely His messenger. Thus it was HaShem's fault. But this freedom to get it wrong, as well as get it right, is one of the elements of *Olam Hazeh*. HaShem was testing His people, to see whether they could look past the messenger, and seek out He Whom was behind the scene, orchestrating and performing all of the miracles, signs and wonders associated with the Exodus from Egypt. (See HaRav Chaim Friedlander, *zt"l*, *“Faith and Divine Providence: A Guide to Hashgachah,”* section entitled, *“An Angel, A Messenger, A Conduit,”* regarding HaShem's emissaries as part of His testing of us.)

Consider an example of one of our learned Sages who had a questionable hashkafah, but who learned of his mistake and corrected it. The Gemara (*Chagigah* 14a) reads:

“One passage says: *His throne was fiery flames*; (*Daniel* 7:9) and another Passage [same *passuk*] says: *Till thrones were places, and One that was ancient of days did sit!* — ***There is no contradiction*** [***“Lo kashya,”*** said the above quoted learned *Yid*]: **one [throne] for Him, and one for David; this is the view of R. Akiva.** Said R. Jose the Galilean to him: Akiva, how long wilt thou treat the Divine Presence as profane! [Rashi: *“How can you seat a flesh and blood king next to G-d?”*] Rather, [it must mean], one for justice and one for grace. Did he [R' Akiva] accept [this explanation from him], or did he not accept it? — Come and hear: **One for justice and one for grace; this is the view of R. Akiva.**”

This author believes he has made his point. To not fully differentiate between HaShem and ANY of His messengers is to fail to sanctify Him (cf. *Bamidbar* 20:12), is to ***“treat the Divine Presence as profane,”*** is to repeat the Sin of the Golden Calf, and is to fail to learn from the mistake, and subsequent correction of the outlook/words (*hashkafos/lashonos*) of Rabbi Akiva.

And if the above does not convey the authenticity of this problem, as well as its urgency, then this author has nothing left to do but quote from the next section of *Meseches Chagigah* (*ibid.*):

“...**But he** [*Yishayahu HaNavi*, after pronouncing eighteen *k'lalos* upon *Klal Yisroel*,] **was not pacified until he said to them** (*Yishayahu* 3:5): ***The child shall behave insolently against the aged:*** — those persons who are empty of good deeds shall behave insolently against such as are filled with good deeds as a pomegranate [with seeds]. ***And the base against the honorable:*** those to whom weighty [precepts] appear as light ones will come and behave insolently against those to whom light [precepts] appear as weighty ones.”

On our Navi not being “satisfied” with eighteen maledictions, heaping on one more, *Iyei HaYam* comments (from the ArtScroll Gemara): **“Part of a prophet's mission is to bring the people to repentance through his earnest appeals to them. As [*Yishayahu*] pronounced the eighteen maledictions, he was distraught; He was foretelling such terrible punishments, yet the people were ignoring him; perhaps the fault lay with him, [*Yishayahu*] thought, that the rebukes were not emanating from his heart. However, when he reached the last malediction, that the young and the**

base would domineer over the elderly and the respectable, he realized that the people's lack of response was itself one of the maledictions, and that the fault was not his."

Regarding the above offering from *Yishayahu* as understood by *Iyei HaTam*, this author does not claim to be a *chacham* in *Kol HaTorah Kulah*, but in an area of Torah where the vast majority of *Yidden* are (sorry!) ignorant, he is the "elder with the respectable *hashkafah*," while those who have not reached a proper *hashkafah* – and, in turn, proper *lashonos* regarding the subjects "*l'vado*" and "*shittuf*" – must be viewed as being "the young and the base." This area has been this author's area, but he claims no prestige because (*Avos* 2:8) **"IF ONE HAS LEARNED MUCH TORAH, DO NOT CLAIM CREDIT UNTO ONESELF, BECAUSE FOR SUCH [PURPOSE] WERE YOU CREATED!"**

This author is not a *navi* – he does not need to be one. All he has to do is recognize that mistakes of his past, as well as the past of the people he has voluntarily joined, learn from those mistakes, and try to keep himself and his new family from repeating them.

This is the penultimate piece on this subject matter. A lengthier piece is forthcoming which will include this "introduction." This author would appreciate thoughtful, well articulated responses, as he believes he has presented a "Golden Calf Proof" case!

Yonason Noach Ben Avraham
Minneapolis, MN
612-812-6946