

## FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY

### Background

Forty days after accepting the Torah, when Moshe Rabbeinu was (seemingly) late in coming down from Har Sinai, the Jewish Nation, assuming that Moshe Rabbeinu had died, worshipped a golden calf. Since this was at the moment of the acceptance of the Torah and the Jewish Nation was still at Har Sinai, this was considered so severe a sin that HASHEM wanted to destroy the entire nation. Moshe Rabbeinu, in defense of the generation, said to HASHEM, "It is You who caused this to happen because You gave them gold and silver."

#### ספר שמות פרק לב

וַיְהִי מִמַּחֲרַת וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעָם אַתֶּם חָטַאתֶם חֲטָאָה גְדוֹלָה וְעַתָּה אֶעֱלֶה אֶל יְדֹד אוֹלֵי אֲכַפְרָה בְּעַד חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם

לֹא וַיָּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל יְדֹד וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי חָטָא הָעָם הַזֶּה חֲטָאָה גְדוֹלָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי זָהָב

לִב) וְעַתָּה אִם תִּשָּׂא חֲטָאתֶם וְאִם אֵין מַחֲנִי נָא מִסְפָּרְךָ אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתָּ

#### רש"י על שמות פרק לב פסוק לא

לֹא) אֱלֹהֵי זָהָב - (ברכות לב יומא פו) אתה הוא שגרמת להם שהשפעת להם זהב וכל חפצם מה יעשו שלא יחטאו. משל למלך שהיה מאכיל ומשקה את בנו ומקשטו ותולה לו כיס בצוארו ומעמידו בפתח בית זונות מה יעשה הבן שלא יחטא

[Moshe Rabbeinu turns to HASHEM and says,] "You caused this. You gave them gold and everything they wanted. What should they do, other than sin? It is comparable to a king who fed his son well, bathed him, put a purse of gold coins on his neck and left him at the entrance to a house of prostitution. What should the son do, other than sin?"

Hashem agreed

#### תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף לב/א

אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן מנין שחזר הקדוש ברוך הוא והודה לו למשה שנאמר וכסף הרביתי להם וזהב עשו לבעל

Rebbe Shmuel bar Nachmani says in the name of Rebbe Yochanan, "From where do we see that HASHEM agreed? Since the posuk says 'I gave them silver and gold [causing them to sin].'"

### Questions

What type of defense is this? We are dealing with a generation that saw HASHEM clearly, the *dor deah*, the generation that reached the greatest heights. Even if there were some reason why wealth still mattered to them at their spiritual height, they were all wealthy! Even more than this, they were living in the desert. There was no commerce, no buying and selling. What good was their money to them in the desert? Yet Moshe Rabbeinu said this caused them to worship idols. How could something so insignificant bring them to so grievous a sin?