

Sin and Transformation:

Exodus 25-40 and the Many Uses of Gold

Rachel Sharansky Danziger * April 5th 2022 * Exodus: The Ins and Outs of Liberty #8

1: Rising and falling

Exodus 24:7-15

(7) Then he took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, “All that ה' has spoken we will faithfully do!” (8) Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that ה' now makes with you concerning all these commands.”..(10) and they saw the God of Israel—under whose feet was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity. (11) Yet [God] did not raise a hand against the leaders of the Israelites; they beheld God, and they ate and drank...(14) To the elders he had said, “Wait here for us until we return to you. You have Aaron and Hur with you; let anyone who has a legal matter approach them.” (15) When Moses had ascended the mountain, the cloud covered the mountain.

Exodus 32:1-6

(1) When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, the people gathered against Aaron and said to him, “Come, make us a god who shall go before us, for that fellow Moses—the man who brought us from the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him.” (2) Aaron said to them, “[You men,] take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” (3) And all the people took off the gold rings that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. (4) This he took from them and cast in a mold, and made it into a molten calf. And they exclaimed, “This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!” (5) When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron announced: “Tomorrow shall be a festival of ה' !” (6) Early next day, the people offered up burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; they sat down to eat and drink, and then rose to dance.

שמות כ"ד:ז-ט"ו

(ז) וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע. (ח) וַיִּקַּח מִשֶּׁה אֶת-הַדָּם וַיִּזְרֹק עַל-הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה דַם-הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת ה' עִמָּכֶם עַל כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה... (י) וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו כַּמַּעֲשֵׂה לְבַנְתּוֹ הַסַּפִּיר וַיִּכְעַצֵּם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהָר. (יא) וְאֶל-אֶצְיֵלֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שָׁלַח יְדוֹ וַיַּחֲזוּ אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ... (יד) וְאֶל-הַזְקֵנִים אָמַר שְׁבוּ-לָנוּ בְּזֶה עַד אֲשֶׁר-נָשׁוּב אֵלֵיכֶם וְהִנֵּה אֶהְרֶן וְחֹר עִמָּכֶם מִי-בְעַל דְּבָרִים יִגַּשׁ אֲלֵהֶם. (טו) וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה אֶל-הַהָר וַיִּכַּס הָעָנָן אֶת-הַהָר.

שמות ל"ב:א'-ו'

(א) וַיִּרְא הָעָם כִּי-בִשַׁשׁ מִשֶּׁה לָרְדַת מִן-הָהָר וַיִּקְהַל הָעָם עַל-אֶהְרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֵינוּ קוּם וַעֲשֵׂה-לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יֵלְכוּ לְפָנֵינוּ כִּי-יָצָא מִצְרַיִם וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיָה לָנוּ מִצְרַיִם לֹא יָדַעְנוּ מִה-הָיָה לָנוּ. (ב) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֶהְרֹן פָּרְקוּ נְזֻמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵי נְשֵׁיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם וּבְנֹתֵיכֶם וְהָבִיאוּ אֵלַי. (ג) וַיִּתְּפְּרוּ כָּל-הָעָם אֶת-נְזֻמֵי הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל-אֶהְרֹן. (ד) וַיִּקַּח מִיָּדָם וַיִּצַר אֹתוֹ בַּחֲרֹט וַיַּעֲשֵׂהוּ עֵגֶל מִסַּכָּה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלֵנוּ מִצְרַיִם מִצְרַיִם. (ה) וַיִּרְא אֶהְרֹן וַיָּבֹן מִזְבֵּחַ לְפָנָיו וַיִּקְרָא אֶהְרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר תָּג לַה' מִחֶרֶת. (ו) וַיִּשְׁכְּלֵמוּ מִמִּחֶרֶת וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּגְשׁוּ שְׁלָמִים וַיֵּשֶׁב הָעָם לְאָכַל וּשְׁתוֹ וַיִּקְמוּ לְצַחֲקֵי. {פ}

2. A later parallel

Judges 8:22-28

Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us—you, your son, and your grandson as well; for you have saved us from the Midianites.” But Gideon replied, “I will not rule over you myself, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD alone shall rule over you.” And Gideon said to them, “I have a request to make of you: Each of you give me the earring he received as booty.” (They had golden earrings, for they were Ishmaelites.) “Certainly!” they replied. And they spread out a cloth, and everyone threw onto it the earring he had received as booty. The weight of the golden earrings that he had requested came to 1,700 shekels of gold; this was in addition to the crescents and the pendants and the purple robes worn by the kings of Midian and in addition to the collars on the necks of their camels. Gideon made an ephod of this gold^b and set it up in his own town of Ophrah. There all Israel went astray after it, and it became a snare to Gideon and his household. Thus Midian submitted to the Israelites and did not raise its head again; and the land was tranquil for forty years in Gideon’s time.

שופטים ח': כ"ב-כ"ח

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-גִּדְעוֹן מִשְׁלֵבְנוּ
 גַם-אַתָּה גַם-בְּנֶה גַם בְּוֹ-בְנֶה כִּי הוֹשַׁעְתָּנוּ
 מִיַּד מִדְיָן: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם גִּדְעוֹן לֹא-אֶמְשַׁל
 אֲנִי בְכֶם וְלֹא-יִמְשַׁל בְּנִי בְכֶם יְהוָה יִמְשַׁל
 בְּכֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם גִּדְעוֹן אֲשַׁאֲלֶה מִכֶּם
 שְׂאֵלָה וְתַנּוּ-לִי אִישׁ גֹּזֵם שָׁלָלוּ כִּי-נִזְמִי זָהָב
 לָהֶם כִּי יִשְׁמַעְאֲלִים הֵם: וַיֹּאמְרוּ נִתְּנוּ וְנִתַּן
 וַיִּפְרְשׂוּ אֶת-הַשְּׂמָלָה וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ שָׁמָּה אִישׁ
 גֹּזֵם שָׁלָלוֹ: וַיְהִי מִשְׁקַל נִזְמִי הַזֶּהָב אֲשֶׁר
 שָׁאֵל אֵלָּה וּשְׁבַע-מֵאוֹת זָהָב לְבַד מִן-
 הַשְּׁהָרִים וְהַנְּטִיפּוֹת וּבַגְדֵי הָאֶרְגָּמָן שְׂעֵל
 מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן וְלְבַד מִן-הַעֲנָקוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּצוּאֵרַי
 גְּמַלְיָהֶם: וַיַּעַשׂ אוֹתוֹ גִּדְעוֹן לְאֵפוֹד וַיִּצַּג
 אוֹתוֹ בְּעִירוֹ בְּעֹפְרָה וַיִּזְנוּ כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל
 אַחֲרָיו שָׁם וַיְהִי לְגִדְעוֹן וּלְבֵיתוֹ לְמוֹקֵשׁ:
 וַיִּכְנַע מִדְיָן לְפָנָיו בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יִסְפוּ
 לְשַׂאת רֹאשָׁם וַתִּשְׁקַט הָאֶרֶץ אַרְבַּעִים שָׁנָה
 בְּיַמֵּי גִדְעוֹן: {פ}

Yoram Hazoni, *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture*, 76:

The repetition of the story, then, permits us to escape the supposition that the sin of the golden calf was an event unique in human history, and to recognize that a more general thesis is being offered concerning human nature, and how it operates under certain kinds of circumstances. Coming out of a terrifying bondage, a people may believe that what it wants above all else is freedom. But this is illusion. True freedom – in which a man stands on his own feet, responsible for his own actions, with nothing but the open sky between himself and God – is in such cases experienced as something terrifying and even dreadful. What a newly liberated people want more than anything else, the narrative suggests, is to have someone above them again, someone who can bear responsibility for them so that they do not have to shoulder this terror and dread themselves. And when this man, this Moses or Gideon, proves unwilling to play a role so similar to that played by their recent oppressors, this people will seek something that is more solid than man, something enduring that will not abandon them in need – the calf, the fetish. Even leaders such as Aaron or Gideon, who have been the agents of God’s will and know the folly of mistaking anything else for God, are not less in danger than the people themselves, since their ear is given to the people’s – needs and they are moved to give the people what they want, ostensibly so that they will not do yet worse things. On this view, the act of liberation carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction, tending immediately to tear open a void in the lives of those who have been freed that is most easily filled by idolatry, whether of one form or another.

3. Moshe stepping up

Exodus 32:7-14

(7) ה' spoke to Moses, "Hurry down, for your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, have acted basely. (8) They have been quick to turn aside from the way that I enjoined upon them. They have made themselves a molten calf and bowed low to it and sacrificed to it, saying: 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!'" (9) ה' further said to Moses, "I see that this is a stiffnecked people. (10) Now, let Me be, that My anger may blaze forth against them and that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation." (11) But Moses implored his God ה', saying, "Let not Your anger, ה', blaze forth against Your people, whom You delivered from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand. (12) Let not the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he delivered them, only to kill them off in the mountains and annihilate them from the face of the earth.' Turn from Your blazing anger, and renounce the plan to punish Your people. (13) Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, how You swore to them by Your Self and said to them: I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and I will give to your offspring this whole land of which I spoke, to possess forever." (14) And ה' renounced the punishment planned for God's people.

Exodus 32:30-35

(30) The next day Moses said to the people, "You have been guilty of a great sin. Yet I will now go up to ה'; perhaps I may win forgiveness for your sin." (31) Moses went back to ה' and said, "Alas, this people is guilty of a great sin in making for themselves a god of gold. (32) Now, if You will forgive their sin [well and good]; but if not, erase me from the record which You have written!" (33) But ה' said to Moses, "Only one who has sinned against Me will I erase from My record. (34) Go now, lead the people where I told you. See, My messenger shall go before you. But when I make an accounting, I will bring them to account for their sins." (35) Then ה' sent a plague upon the people, for what they did with the calf that Aaron made.

שמות ל"ב:זי-י"ד

(ו) וידבר ה' אל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר לָךְ-רֵד כִּי שָׁחַת עַמָּה אֲשֶׁר הֵעַלִיתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: (ח) סָרוּ מִהָרַם מִן-הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוִיתָם עֲשׂוּ לָהֶם עֵגֶל מִסִּכָּה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ-לוֹ וַיִּזְבְּחוּ-לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֵעַלְנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: (ט) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה רְאִיתִי אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהִנֵּה עִם-קָשָׁה-עֲרֹף הוּא: (י) וְעַתָּה הִנֵּיחָה לִי וַיִּחַר-אַפִּי בָהֶם וְאָכַלְתֶּם וְאַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָהּ לְגוֹי גְדוֹל: (יא) וַיִּחַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת-פָּנָיו ה' אֱלֹהָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה ה' יִחַרְהָ אִפְּךָ בְּעַמֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּכַח גְּדוֹל וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה: (יב) לָמָּה יֹאמְרוּ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר בְּרָעָה הוֹצִיאָם לְהַרְגֵם אֹתָם בְּהָרִים וּלְכַלְתֶּם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה שׁוּב מִחֲרוֹן אַפְּךָ וְהַנִּתָּם עַל-הָרָעָה לַעֲמָה: (יג) זָכֹר לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֶּיךָ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לָהֶם בְּרֵךְ וּתְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אַרְבָּה אֶת-זֶרְעֶכֶם כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכָל-הָאָרֶץ הִיא אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי אֲתֹן לְזֶרְעֶכֶם וְנָחַלְוּ לְעַלְמֵם: (יד) וַיִּנָּחַם ה' עַל-הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לַעֲשׂוֹת לַעֲמּוֹ: {פ}

שמות ל"ב:לי-ל"ה

(ל) וַיְהִי מִמַּחֲרַת וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-הָעָם אַתֶּם חָטַאתֶם חֲטָאָה גְדוֹלָה וְעַתָּה אֲעַלְהָ אֶל-ה' אוֹלֵי אֲכַפְרָה בְּעַד חֲטַאתְכֶם: (לא) וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל-ה' וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי חָטָא הָעָם הַזֶּה חֲטָאָה גְדוֹלָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים זָהָב: (לב) וְעַתָּה אִם-תִּשָׂא חֲטַאתָם וְאִם-אֵין מִחְנֵי נָא מִסְפָּרָה אֲשֶׁר כְּתַבְתָּ: (לג) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה מִי אֲשֶׁר חָטָא לִי אֲמַחְגּוּ מִסְפָּרָיו: (לד) וְעַתָּה לָךְ וְנָחָה אֶת-הָעָם אֶל אֲשֶׁר-דִּבַּרְתִּי לָךְ הִנֵּה מִלְּאֲכֵי יָלְדָה לְפָנֶיךָ וּבְיָוִם פְּקֹדֵי וּפְקֹדֹתַי עֲלֵהֶם חֲטַאתָם: (לה) וַיִּגַּף ה' אֶת-הָעָם עַל אֲשֶׁר עֲשׂוּ אֶת-הָעֵגֶל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אַהֲרֹן: {ס}

4: Forgiveness and chosenness

Exodus 33:12-23

(12) Moses said to ה', "See, You say to me, 'Lead this people forward,' but You have not made known to me whom You will send with me. Further, You have said, 'I have singled you out by name, and you have, indeed, gained My favor.' (13) Now, if I have truly gained Your favor, pray let me know Your ways, that I may know You and continue in Your favor. Consider, too, that this nation is Your people." (14) And [God] said, "I will go in the lead and will lighten your burden." (15) And he replied, "Unless You go in the lead, do not make us leave this place. (16) For how shall it be known that Your people have gained Your favor unless You go with us, so that we may be distinguished, Your people and I, from every people on the face of the earth?" (17) And ה' said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have asked; for you have truly gained My favor and I have singled you out by name."... (23) Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen."

Exodus 34:5-11

(5) ה' came down in a cloud—and stood with him there, proclaiming the name ה (6) ה' passed before him and proclaimed: "הוה ! ה' ! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, (7) extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin—yet not remitting all punishment, but visiting the iniquity of parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations." (8) Moses hastened to bow low to the ground in homage, (9) and said, "If I have gained Your favor, O my lord, pray, let my lord go in our midst, even though this is a stiffnecked people. Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Your own!" (10) [God] said: I hereby make a covenant. Before all your people I will work such wonders as have not been wrought on all the earth or in any nation; and all the people who are with you shall see how awesome are יהוה's deeds which I will perform for you. (11) Mark well what I command you this day. I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

שמות ל"ג:כ"ב-כ"ג

(יב) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־ה' רְאֵה אֶתְּךָ אֹמֵר אֵלַי הֲעֵל אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה וְאֶתְּךָ לֹא הוֹדַעְתָּנִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־תִּשְׁלַח עִמִּי וְאֶתְּךָ אָמַרְתָּ יִדְעֶתְיָךְ בְּשֵׁם וְגַם־מִצְאָתָהּ חֵן בְּעֵינָי. (יג) וְעַתָּה אִם־נָא מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הוֹדַעְנִי נָא אֶת־דְּרָכְךָ וְאֲדַעֲךָ לְמַעַן אֲמַצְאֶחֶן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה כִּי עֲמָהּ הִגִּי הַזֶּה. (יד) וַיֹּאמֶר פָּנֶי יִלְכוּ וְהִנַּחְתִּי לָךְ. (טו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אִם־אֵין פְּנִיָה הַלְכִים אֶל־תֵּעָלְגוּ מִזֶּה. (טז) וּבִמְקוֹה וַיִּדַּע אֲפֹא כִּי־מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲנִי וְעַמָּה הַלֹּא בְּלִבְתָּךְ עֲמָנוּ וְנִפְלִינוּ אֲנִי וְעַמָּה מִכָּל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה. {פ} (יז) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה גַם אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֶעֱשֶׂה כִּי־מִצְאָתָהּ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְאֲדַעֲךָ בְּשֵׁם... (כג) וְהִסַּרְתִּי אֶת־כַּפִּי וּרְאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֶרְךָ וּפְנֵי לֹא יֵרְאוּ. {פ}

שמות ל"ד:ה'-י"א

(ה) וַיֵּרֶד ה' בְּעָנָן וַיִּתְצַב עִמּוֹ שָׁם וַיְקַרָּא בְּשֵׁם ה'. (ו) וַיַּעֲבֵר ה' וְעַל־פְּנֵי וַיִּקְרָא ה' ה' אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אַרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חַסֵּד וְאַמֵּת. (ז) נֹצֵר חַסֵּד לְאֲלֵפִים נֹשֵׂא עֲוֹן וּפֹשַׁע וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקְהָה לֹא יִנְקָה פֶקֶד וְעֲוֹן אֲבוֹת עַל־בְּנִים וְעַל־בְּנֵי בְנִים עַל־שְׁלֵשִׁים וְעַל־רִבְעִים. (ח) וַיִּמְהַר מֹשֶׁה וַיִּקַּד אַרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה. (ט) וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־נָא מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדוּשָׁם יִלְהֶ־נָּא אֲדוּשָׁם בְּקִרְבִּנוּ כִּי עִם־קִשְׁה־עֲרֹף־הוּא וְסִלַּחְתָּ לְעוֹנֵנוּ וּלְחַטָּאתֵנוּ וְנִחַלְתָּנוּ. (י) וַיֹּאמֶר הַנְּה אֲנִכִּי כִכְרַת בְּרִית נִגְדַּד כָּל־עַמָּה אֶעֱשֶׂה נִפְלְאוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נִבְרְאוּ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם וּרְאֵה כָּל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־אֵתְּךָ בְּקִרְבּוֹ אֶת־מַעֲשֶׂה ה' כִּי־נִוְרָא הוּא אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךְ. (יא) שְׁמַר־לָךְ אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם הַנִּינִי גִרְשׁ מִפְּנֵיךְ אֶת־הָאֱמֹרִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי.

5: Forgiveness and freedom

Rosh Hashana 17b:

§ The verse states: **“And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed”** (Exodus 34:6). **Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Were it not explicitly written in the verse, it would be impossible to say this,** as it would be insulting to God’s honor. The verse **teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, wrapped Himself in a prayer shawl like a prayer leader and showed Moses the structure of the order of the prayer. He said to him: Whenever the Jewish people sin, let them act before Me in accordance with this order.** Let the prayer leader wrap himself in a prayer shawl and publicly recite the thirteen attributes of mercy, **and I will forgive them.** The verse continues: **“The Lord, the Lord,”** and it should be understood as follows: **I am He before a person sins, and I am He after a person sins and performs repentance,** as God does not recall for him his first sins, since He is always **“God, merciful and gracious”** (Exodus 34:6). **Rav Yehuda said: A covenant was made with the thirteen attributes that they will not return empty-handed,** meaning that if one mentions them, he will certainly be answered, **as it is stated** in this regard: **“Behold, I make a covenant”** (Exodus 34:10).

§ **Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Great is repentance, for it tears up the sentence issued against a person, as it is stated: “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and smear over their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and they will return, and be healed”** (Isaiah 6:10), implying that if indeed they return and repent, they will be healed from all their sins.

8: A foundation of giving

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, “The Labour of Gratitude”:

The construction of the Sanctuary was fundamentally important because it gave the Israelites the chance to give back to God. Later Jewish law recognised that giving is an integral part of human dignity when they made the remarkable ruling that even a poor person completely dependent on charity is still obliged to give charity.[3] To be in a situation where you can only receive, not give, is to lack human dignity.

The *Mishkan* became the home of the Divine Presence because God specified that it be built only out of voluntary contributions. Giving creates a gracious society by enabling each of us to make our contribution to the public good. That is why the building of the Sanctuary was the cure for the sin of the Golden Calf. A society that only received but could not give was trapped in dependency and lack of self-respect. God allowed the people to come close to Him, and He to them, by giving them the chance to give.

6: God's forgiveness in the song of songs

Song of Songs 4:1-7

Ah, you are fair, my darling, Ah, you are fair.
Your eyes are like doves Behind your veil.
Your hair is like a flock of goats Streaming down
Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of ewes
Climbing up from the washing pool; All of them bear
twins, And not one loses her young. Your lips are
like a crimson thread, Your mouth is lovely. Your
brow behind your veil [Gleams] like a pomegranate
split open. Your neck is like the Tower of David,
Built to hold weapons, Hung with a thousand
shields— All the quivers of warriors. Your breasts
are like two fawns, Twins of a gazelle, Browsing
among the lilies. When the day blows gently And the
shadows flee, I will betake me to the mount of myrrh,
To the hill of frankincense. Every part of you is fair,
my darling, There is no blemish in you.

Song of Songs 6:1-7

“Whither has your beloved gone, O fairest of
women? Whither has your beloved turned? Let us
seek him with you.” My beloved has gone down to
his garden, To the beds of spices, To browse in the
gardens And to pick lilies. I am my beloved's And
my beloved is mine; He browses among the
lilies. You are beautiful, my darling, as Tirzah,
Comely as Jerusalem, Awesome as bannered hosts.^a
Turn your eyes away from me, For they overwhelm
me! Your hair is like a flock of goats Streaming
down from Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of
ewes Climbing up from the washing pool; All of
them bear twins, And not one loses her young. Your
brow behind your veil [Gleams] like a pomegranate
split open.

Song of Songs 7:4

(4) Your breasts are like two fawns,
Twins of a gazelle.

שיר השירים ד:א-ז

הַנֶּהָר יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי הַנֶּהָר יָפָה עֵינֶיךָ
יוֹנִים מִבְּעַד לְצַמְתְּךָ שְׁעָרֶךָ כְּעֵדֶר
הָעֹזִים שְׂגָלָשׁוּ מִתֵּר גִּלְעָד: שְׁנִיָּהּ
כְּעֵדֶר הַקְּצוּבוֹת שְׁעָלוּ מִזֶּרְחָצְחָה
שְׂכָלָם מִתְּאִימוֹת וְשִׂכְלָה אֵין בָּהֶם:
כַּחוּט הַשָּׁנִי שִׁפְתוֹתֶיךָ וּמִדְּבָרֶךָ
נֶאֱנָה כְּפֶלַח הָרְמוֹן רִקְתָּךְ מִבְּעַד
לְצַמְתְּךָ: כְּמַגְדֵּל דָּוִד צוּאֲרֶה בְּנוֹי
לְתַלְפִּיּוֹת אֶלֶף הַמְּגֹן תִּלְוִי עָלָיו כֹּל
שְׁלֹטֵי הַגְּבָרִים: שְׁנֵי שְׂדֵיךָ כְּשְׁנֵי
עֶפְרַיִם תְּאֻמֵּי צְבִיָּה הַרוֹעִים
בְּשׁוֹשְׁנִים: עַד שְׁיִפּוּחֵי הַיּוֹם וְנָסוּ
הַצִּלְלִים אֵלֶיךָ לִי אֶל־תֵּר הַמִּזֹּר
וְאֶל־גִּבְעַת הַלְּבוֹנָה: כָּלֶךָ יָפָה
רַעֲיָתִי וּמִוִּם אֵין בָּהּ: {ס}

שיר השירים ו:א-ז

אָנָּה הָלַךְ דוֹדְךָ הִיפָּה בְּנָשִׁים אָנָּה
פָּנָה דוֹדְךָ וּנְבַקְשֶׁנּוּ עִמָּךְ: דוֹדִי יִרְדֵּ
לְגַנּוֹ לְעֶרְגוֹת הַבָּשָׂם לְרְעוֹת בְּגַנָּים
וְלִלְקֹט שׁוֹשְׁנִים: אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי
לִי הִרְעָה בְּשׁוֹשְׁנִים: {ס} יָפָה
אֶת רַעֲיָתִי כְּתִרְצָה נָאֵה
כִּירוֹשְׁלָם אֵימָה כְּנִדְגָלוֹת: הַסְּבִי
עֵינֶיךָ מִמְּגֵדִי שֶׁהֵם הִרְהִיבֵנִי שְׁעָרֶךָ
כְּעֵדֶר הָעֹזִים שְׂגָלָשׁוּ מִזֶּרְחָצְחָה:
שְׁנִיָּהּ כְּעֵדֶר הַרְחָלִים שְׁעָלוּ מִזֶּרְחָצְחָה
שְׂכָלָם מִתְּאִימוֹת וְשִׂכְלָה
אֵין בָּהֶם: כְּפֶלַח הָרְמוֹן רִקְתָּךְ
מִבְּעַד לְצַמְתְּךָ:

שיר השירים ז:ד

(ד) שְׁנֵי שְׂדֵיךָ כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם תְּאֻמֵּי צְבִיָּה:

7: God's home and freedom from passivity

Exodus 25:1-3

(1) ה' spoke to Moses, saying: (2) Tell the Israelite people to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart is so moved. (3) And these are the gifts that you shall accept from them: gold, silver, and copper;

שמות כ"ה:א'-ג'

(א) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ־לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת כָּל־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנֵנו לְבוֹתָקְחוּ אֶת־תְּרוּמָתִי: (ג) וְזֹאת הַתְּרוּמָה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְחוּ מֵאֲתָם זָהָב וְכֶסֶף וְנַחְשֶׁת:

Exodus 25:8

(8) And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.

שמות כ"ה:ח'

(ח) וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם:

אור החיים על שמות כ"ה:ח':ג'

ושכנתי בתוכם. ולא אמר בתוכו לומר שהמקום אשר יקדישו לשכנו יהיה בתוך בני ישראל שיקיפו המשכן בד' דגלים. ואולי כי דברים אלו הם תשובה למה שחשקו ישראל (במד"ר פ"ב) בראותם בהר סיני שהיה ברוך הוא מוקף בדגלי המלאכים והוא אות בתוכם וחשקו אהב להיות כן בתוכם, ולזה באה התשובה מבוחר לבות ואמר ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי כמו כן בתוכם:

Rashi on Exodus 31:18:1

AND HE GAVE UNTO MOSES etc. — There is no “earlier” or “later” (no chronological order) in the events related in the Torah: in fact the incident of the golden calf (related in ch. 31) happened a considerable time before the command regarding the work of the Tabernacle was given.

Exodus 36:3-7

(3) They took over from Moses all the gifts that the Israelites had brought, to carry out the tasks connected with the service of the sanctuary. But when these continued to bring freewill offerings to him morning after morning, (4) all the artisans who were engaged in the tasks of the sanctuary came, from the task upon which each one was engaged, (5) and said to Moses, “The people are bringing more than is needed for the tasks entailed in the work that ה' has commanded to be done.” (6) Moses thereupon had this proclamation made throughout the camp: “Let no man or woman make further effort toward gifts for the sanctuary!” So the people stopped bringing: (7) their efforts had been more than enough for all the tasks to be done.

שמות ל"ו:ג'-ז'

(ג) וַיִּקְחוּ מִלִּפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל־הַתְּרוּמָה אֲשֶׁר הֵבִיאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִלְאֶכֶת עֲבֹדַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתָהּ וְהֵם הֵבִיאוּ אֵלָיו עוֹד נְדָבָה בַּבֶּקֶר בַּבֶּקֶר: (ד) וַיָּבִיאוּ כָּל־הַחֲכָמִים הָעֹשִׂים אֶת כָּל־מִלְאֶכֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ אִישׁ־אִישׁ מִמִּלְאֲכָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־הֵמָּה עֹשִׂים: (ה) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר מְרַבִּים הָעָם לְהֵבִיא מִדֵּי הָעֲבֹדָה לְמִלְאֲכָהּ אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתָהּ: (ו) וַיִּצְוּ מֹשֶׁה וַיַּעֲבִירוּ קוֹל בְּמַחֲנֶה לֵאמֹר אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אַל־יַעֲשׂוּ־עוֹד מִלְאֲכָה לְתְרוּמַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ וַיִּכְלָא הָעָם מִהֵבִיא: (ז) וְהִמְלֵאֲכָה הַיְתֵרָה דִּים לְכָל־הַמִּלְאֲכָה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתָהּ וְהוֹתֵר: {ס}

9: A new type of leadership

Exodus 29:44-46

(44) I will sanctify the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and I will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve Me as priests. (45) I will abide among the Israelites, and I will be their God. (46) And they shall know that I ה' am their God, who brought them out from the land of Egypt that I might abide among them—I, their God ה'.

שמות כ"ט:מ"ד-מ"ו

(מד) וְקִדְשְׁתִּי אֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
וְאֶת־אֹהֶרֶן וְאֶת־בָּנָיו אֶקְדָּשׁ לְכַהֵן לִי: (מה)
וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם
לְאֱלֹקִים: (מו) וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר
הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְשַׁכְנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם
אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיהֶם: {פ}

Rabbi Jonathan sacks, Leviticus: The Democratization of Holiness:

...that was what the crisis of the Golden Calf was about. At that moment, Moses was the sole connection between heaven and earth. Absent him, and there was terror. Yet why did the problem surface then and not in the days of Noah or Abraham..? The answer is that Judaism's fundamental solution to the distance between God and man is language. Words alone have the power to cross the abyss between finite humans and the infinite God... That is a solution that worked for individuals. What happens when the Israelites become a nation?... The making of the Golden Calf was a mistake, a sin. But the crisis that led to it was real and enduring. What would become of the people in the absence of Moses or someone like him? How could the nation take the risk of depending entirely on God when God was so distant, overpowering, and unpredictable? That is when God gave the answer that led to the forty-chapter digression in the story of the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.... "Let them make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst". This is the start of an entirely new relationship between God and the people. The verb "to dwell" had never before been used in relation to God. The root *sh-kh-n* means a neighbour, someone who lives next door. God was about to become not just the force that moves the stars and changes the course of history, but also the one who is close... (11)

This relationship between God and the people would be mediated by a new kind of religious leader, not Moses the prophet but Aaron the priest. You cannot predict the appearance of a new prophet... But the priesthood is predictable... The priesthood represents continuity immune to the vicissitudes of time. (12)