

have a Nageela Shabbos

A weekly publication of **Nageela West** Joyfully Jewish Experiences

Check Out My Calves

by Rabbi Dani Locker

candle lighting:

Las Vegas 6:32
Los Angeles 6:45
San Diego 6:40
Phoenix 6:19

It was the perfect fairytale story. We all know it. The Jewish people, long ago, were slaves in the land of Egypt. They were terribly mistreated, and all hope seemed lost. G-d had mercy upon them and sent the great redeemer, Moshe, to free them. Moshe, as the messenger of G-d brought ten frightening plagues which all but destroyed the formerly great Egyptian empire. The entire nation, millions of people left Egypt, and when, in a desperate try to get his slaves back, the Egyptian king led his army to chase the Jewish people, G-d performed the greatest miracle of all, leading His people safely through a sea while the Egyptians drowned beneath the turbulent waters. Soon after, the Jewish nation camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, where G-d had promised He would gift to them the Torah, is greatest gift, which would forever act as the 'marriage contract' between G-d and His people. Totally awesome! Until it got messed up...

When Moshe climbed the mountain to receive the Torah from G-d, he took quite a while, more than a month! While he was gone, some of the people got impatient, and wanted to be sure they had a leader. So they made a bonfire, and roasted s'mores. And gold. The s'mores didn't cause much of a problem, but the gold was formed into a calf (the cow kind, not the kind on your leg) which people started to worship.

This whole episode is disappointing (like a terrible sequel), but one thing especially bothers me. When the calf was formed, the main troublemakers (you know, the ones who got sent to the principal's office daily) said, "This is your God, Israel, who took you out of the land of Egypt!" Maybe it's just me, but that

sounds really stupid. Could you imagine if someone pointed to a random person and said, "Oh, by the way, that's your mother. She gave birth to you and raised you." You can try to fool me with a lot of things, but not something so clear and obvious! Why would the Jews possibly believe that this calf was the God who took them out of Egypt?

According to the classic commentaries, they did not only worship this cow. They ate, drank and partied and did all kinds of things that were forbidden. What they meant by "This is your God," is "This is what G-d actually meant when He took you out of Egypt. He did not free you from slavery to be bound by loads of rules. Rather, He wanted you to have freedom to do whatever you want! This is [the will of] your G-d, Israel, [which is why he] took you out of Egypt!" What these people missed is that G-d did not take us out of Egypt so we could be FREE. He took us out of Egypt so we could be GREAT! That's why He gave us the Torah.

Sometimes people think, "If G-d wants me to be so disciplined and follow rules, why did He fill the world with so many tempting distractions? We have to remember, "THIS is our G-d!" The One who freed us from slavery is the same one who gave us rules and boundaries. He wants us to rise up to become magnificent people and has given us the tools to do it. Our mission is to stay focused on becoming great, and not be distracted by all the good that we seem to see.

Jesse opened the package of his new earbuds to find an incredible prize! A certificate told him that he'd just won the grand prize- an unlimited 30 minutes shopping spree from his favorite

electronics store! He began to dream of all the things he could grab in a half hour. TVs and sound systems, a new guitar, all the games he could ever want, the best drone... he started drooling when he thought of it all! The day came and stood at the entrance of the store. The sounded the buzzer and he ran in, and stopped to look at an amazing set of gaming headphones attached to the newest system. Wanting to try them out, he put the headphones on, and began to play, relishing the incredible noise cancelling quality and the incredible gaming experience. They were so good, he didn't even hear the ending buzzer as his time ran out! "No fair! I just stopped for a minute to check out these headphones!"

"The headphones are yours," replied the store manager, "But your time is up, and you forgot to get everything else."

Think about the story. Think about the golden calf. And decide how TODAY, you can do something to stay focused on your goals in life, instead of the distractions. ✨

VERY PUNNY

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THOSE WHO CAN COUNT AND THOSE WHO CAN NOT COUNT.

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STUMP THE RABBI



Dear Rabbi,

I know that Jews consider Jerusalem the most important place on Earth, right?

What's special about it? I think there was a temple there? How can one place be more special or holy than another place, anyway?

Thanks,

Patricia Lacey

Dear holy P.Lacey

I live in Nevada. One of our most important historic sites is the Hoover Dam, which was built about 85 years ago. The site of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, also called 'The Temple Mount' (Har Habayit) or 'Har Hamoriah' (Mount Moriah) has history going back well over 5 thousand years! *Midrash tells us that Adam sacrificed there, as well as his son, Hevel. When Avraham brought his son Yitzchak, planning on offering him as a sacrifice, the location was Mount Moriah, later named Jerusalem. That incredibly selfless act of dedication marked the spot as dear to G-d. Later, when his grandson Yaakov traveled, he made sure to stop and pray at this spot (and his famous dream of the ladder took place there).

What has that got to do with us? It all happened so long ago!

Do you know how wine is made? Well, yeah, they squeeze grapes, but then the juice has to ferment by hanging around doing nothing but reading old comic books for years! After the wine is finished and they pour it out of the barrels and into the bottles, what do they do with the barrels?

Many whiskey and beer companies use old wine barrels to create their drinks. Even though these barrels (called casks) may have been cleaned, some of the wine's flavor remains and helps the new whiskey taste better.

Places work the same way. When a great act is done

in a place (like a great person praying), it adds a 'flavor' of holiness to that place. When great acts are done, in the future, the old flavor mingles with the new to create an extra special merit.

King Shlomo built the Beit Hamikdash on this site because so many righteous and selfless acts had been done in this location, that they actually helped increase the quality of our connection to G-d in that location. Now that both the first and second temples have stood in this spot, not to mention the millions who have come to pray and study in the shadow of their last remaining wall, the Kotel Memaaravi (Western Wall), it's like completely superpowered! The same applies to every Synagogue and Yeshiva. Once a place is designated for holiness, and people perform mitzvos there, it becomes a place with the taste of those mitzvos! That's why, if you have a choice, it's always better to pray and study in an official synagogue or Yeshiva rather than at home (even without a minyan). Similarly, we have the power to transform our own homes, schools, our rooms, gyms, pools, phones and computers into holy places and items based on the actions we do. Every time we use our possessions or our homes for good, we are creating a positive energy, a taste, that will increase the goodness of everything we do in that place in the future.

Just remember: location, location, location!

*See Kli Yakar to Bereishis 3:23

Have a Nageela Shabbat,

the Rabbi

Stump the Rabbi is a forum where kids can ask ANY Jewish question.

Have a question? Please send it in to stump@nageelawest.org

Questions here are real. Names and some wording have been changed

nageela week snapshot (Mar 19-March 25)

SUN	MON	THU	FRI
NAGEELA HEBREW SCHOOL LAS VEGAS - 10AM JIL BEVERLY HILLS	SUMMERLIN NAGEELATTE 6:45PM	GREEN VALLEY NAGEELATTE 5:30	SPECIAL PRESENTATION @ ADELSON SCHOOL JEWISH NBA AGENT

Nageela West provides social and educational programs for Jewish children across the west coast.
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