



It is very hard to understand.

Every year we come back to this פרשה (parashah ;

Torah portion), and we study it again. We try to dig deeper to uncover the lessons of human nature and the frailties that exist within us.



Moshe Breaks the Tablets

I want to share with you a teaching from the משך חכמה (Meshech Chochmah ; the commentary of Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk).

The פסוק (pasuk ; verse) says:

ויהי כאשר קרב אל המחנה (vayehi ka'asher karav el hamachaneh ; when Moshe approached the camp)

וירא את העגל ומחולות (vayar et ha'egel u'mecholot ; he saw the calf and the dancing)

ויחר אף משה (vayichar af Moshe ; Moshe became very angry)

וישלך מידיה את הלוחות (vayashlech miyadav et haluchot ; he threw the tablets from his hands)

וישבר אותם תחת ההר (vayishaber otam tachat hahar ; he shattered them at the foot of the mountain).

משה רבינו (Moshe Rabbeinu ; Moses our teacher) realized the Jewish people did not deserve these tablets.

So he smashed them.

On a simple level it's almost like a father who gets angry and says:

“You know what? You don't deserve this Xbox. You don't deserve these tickets.”

And he rips them up.

That is the simple explanation.

The Puzzle of the Golden Calf

פרשת כי תשא (Parashat Ki Tissa ; the Torah portion describing the sin of the Golden Calf).

We read about the Jewish people committing one of the worst sins imaginable in history: the חטא העגל (chet ha'egel ; the sin of the Golden Calf).

Very famous in this פרשה (parashah ; Torah portion).

How could it be that just days after receiving the תורה (Torah ; the Divine teaching) and hearing God Himself — God Almighty — give us the commandments?

What clarity.

What a revelation.

Something you could never imagine.

And somehow just days later the Jewish people fell to such a low level that they pointed to a golden image and said:

“This god took us out of Egypt.”



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

“You don’t deserve it! Shame on you!
If you deserve it I’ll give it to you.
In the meantime — you don’t deserve it.”

But the *Meshech Chochmah* ; commentary of Rabbi Meir Simcha) sees something deeper.

Something much deeper.

Why did Moshe break the tablets?

What was his real goal?

The Nature of Holiness

The *Meshech Chochmah* explains something fundamental.

We know there is something called קדושה (*kedushah* ; holiness).

Holiness exists all around us.

There are holy people.

There are holy places.

There are holy things.

You have holy תורה (*Torah* ; Divine teaching).

You have holy places.

You have ירושלים (*Yerushalayim* ; Jerusalem).

You have the כותל (*Kotel* ; the Western Wall).

There are holy rabbis.

There is משה רבינו (*Moshe Rabbeinu* ; Moses our teacher).

But we must remember something extremely important.

Something is only holy because God willed it to be holy.

Something is only holy because of its connection to השם (*Hashem* ; God).

Nothing is intrinsically holy.

Nothing has holiness independent of הקדוש ברוך הוא (*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* ; the Holy One, blessed be He).

The moment something is detached from God, it has zero holiness.

חס ושלום (*chas v’shalom* ; Heaven forbid).

When Holiness Leaves

A synagogue — a שול (*shul* ; synagogue) — is only holy because we pray there and connect to God.

The moment that connection is gone, the building is nothing.

It is just rocks.

The כותל (*Kotel* ; the Western Wall) is just stones.

Why is it holy?

Because God willed it.

Because God attached His presence there.

The פסוק (*pasuk* ; verse) says:

ומקדשי תיראו (*umikdashi tira’u* ; you shall fear My sanctuary).

But our rabbis explain in מסכת יבמות (*Masechet Yevamot* ; the Talmudic tractate *Yevamot*):

לא מן המקדש אתה ירא (*lo min hamikdash atah yarei* ; you are not fearing the sanctuary itself)



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

אלא ממי שהזהיר על המקדש (*ela mimi shehizhir al hamikdash* ; rather the One who commanded regarding the sanctuary).

You are not fearing the building.

You are fearing the One who commanded it.

Even the קדש הקדשים (*Kodesh HaKodashim* ; the Holy of Holies) – the holiest place in the Temple – had nothing intrinsically holy about it.

It was holy because God said it was holy.

The moment God removed His presence, it became just a room.

Just a room.

The Story of Titus

The proof?

Titus the wicked.

Titus entered the Holy of Holies with a harlot and performed a terrible act.

This was a place where if a כהן גדול (*Kohen Gadol* ; High Priest) entered improperly – even one day of the year when he was not allowed – he would die.

They would tie a rope around the waist of the כהן גדול (*Kohen Gadol* ; High Priest).

Why?

Because if he died inside, they would need to pull his body out.

But Titus – a wicked, corrupt man – entered and committed an immoral act.

And nothing happened.

How could that be?

Where was the holiness?

The answer is:

The holiness had already left.

The holiness left when the Jewish people stopped observing the מצוות (*mitzvot* ; commandments).

הקדוש ברוך הוא (*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* ; the Holy One blessed be He) removed His presence.

And once that presence left –

There was nothing there.

When We Detach Holiness from God

And this idea is extremely important that we never forget it.

Because the moment we give something its own holiness and detach it from God – that is almost literally idolatry.

When you say that a person is their own agent and not a messenger, when you idolize a figure – I don't care if he has a beard, I don't care how big a רב (*rav* ; rabbi) he is – the moment you make someone holy and disconnect him from God, you turn that person into an idol.

That is why it is so important when we pray.

People make mistakes.

They go to a cemetery and they pray to a person.

That is עבודה זרה (*avodah zarah* ; idolatry).

What are you doing?



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

You are praying to a person to help you?

You are saying: please help me.

This person cannot help you. First of all, he is dead.

He cannot help you.

They are powerless.

The correct way to pray at a cemetery is to pray to השם (Hashem ; God) in the merit of the righteous person buried there.

To say:

“God, please help me in the merit of this righteous person.”

That is the correct way.

There are some opinions that say you could also ask the righteous person to advocate for you – to go to God on your behalf.

But even then, it still goes back to God.

Everything goes back to השם (Hashem ; God).

The moment you cut God out of the picture, you turn something into its own religion.

You turn it into עבודה זרה (avodah zarah ; idolatry).

The Etrog and the Mistake of Detached Holiness

A person has to constantly remember:

Why am I doing this?

Why am I praying?

Why am I shaking the אתרוג (etrog ; the citron used on Sukkot)?

Because God made the אתרוג holy.

If a person forgets that, what happens is their

values slowly become backwards.

You could have a scenario where a person wants to kiss the תורה (Torah ; the sacred scroll).

The תורה is holy.

And what will they do?

They will push people out of the way to get to the תורה so they can kiss it.

They will step on people.

Why?

“Torah! Torah! I have to kiss the Torah!”

But the priorities are completely backwards.

Because what makes the תורה holy is God.

And the same God that said kiss the תורה also said:

ואהבת לרעך כמוך (ve'ahavta l'recha kamocha ; love your fellow as yourself).

But when a person removes God from the picture, suddenly objects carry their own independent weight.

You kiss a סידור (siddur ; prayer book).

You pick up a ספר (sefer ; holy book) that falls on the floor.

And you should.

But how could it be that you are stepping on your friend who is lying on the floor?

What happened to the holiness that God gave?



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

The answer is that over time a person forgets that God is the source.

The book became holy on its own.

And so God slowly disappears from the picture.

How Idolatry Began

This is actually how idolatry began in the world.

The רמב"ם (*Rambam* ; Maimonides) explains that עבודה זרה (*avodah zarah* ; idolatry) started with a mistake.

People thought:

God is too abstract.

You cannot pray to something so abstract.

You need something tangible.

So they said: let's pray to something that will help us connect to Him.

You can see the same thing happen inside a synagogue.

A person might think they must go to the ארון (*aron* ; the ark where the Torah scrolls are kept) in order to pray.

They have to kiss the ארון.

But what is the ארון?

It is a piece of metal.

Do you need the ark to pray to God?

Of course not.

But sometimes a person feels that if they can touch something tangible, it helps them relate.

It helps them focus.

But what happens slowly over time?

The object becomes the magic.

The object becomes the good-luck charm.

The statue you are holding becomes the thing you believe in.

It started as a tool to help connect to God.

But slowly the God part disappears.

And the object becomes the religion.

The "President" Analogy

The Meshech Chochmah explains another mistake that led to idolatry.

People thought God is too lofty.

God is too great.

It would be embarrassing to go directly to Him.

Think about it.

Could you walk right now into the president's office?

Of course not.

You cannot just walk up to the president.

You go through layers.

First the secretary.

Then someone else.



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

Then someone else.

If you are important enough, maybe you get an appointment.

But someone insignificant cannot approach him.

So people thought the same thing about God.

“You are nothing,” they said.

“You are like an ant.”

“You cannot go to God directly.”

You need intermediaries.

You need stars.

You need powerful forces.

Through them you can reach God.

But the Meshech Chochmah explains the mistake.

If God is infinite, then everything else compared to Him is equally nothing.

The size of an ant.

The size of a building.

Compared to infinity – it is the same.

So to God, everything is equally close.

The Story of the Philistines and the Ark

We see an example of this mistake in the book of שמואל (*Shmuel* ; the Book of Samuel).

When the ארון (*aron* ; the Ark of the Covenant) was captured by the פלשתים (*Plishtim* ; the Philistines), a plague struck them.

God sent a plague to punish them for stealing the Ark.

And the

Philistines said:

מי יצילנו מיד האלהים האדירים האלה
(*mi yatzilenu miyad ha'elohim ha'adirim ha'eleh* ; who will save us from these mighty gods?)

Notice what they did.

They attributed the plague to the Ark itself.

As if the Ark was the power.

As if the Ark was the deity.

Moshe Rabbeinu Is Not the Source

משה רבינו (*Moshe Rabbeinu* ; Moses our teacher) is a holy man.

But why is he holy?

Because he is connected to God.

He is a transmitter.

He is not a generator.

He cannot do anything on his own.

He is a messenger.

And what happened during the episode of the עגל (*egel* ; the Golden Calf)?

The people slowly began relating to Moshe as if he was the source.

They turned him into something independent.

They turned him into his own power.

They did the same thing you can do with an object.



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

You can turn an אתרוג (etrog ; the citron used on Sukkot) into something holy by itself.

But an אתרוג is nothing.

A mountain is nothing.

What made הר סיני (Har Sinai ; Mount Sinai) special?

God said it was special.

But the moment God left the mountain, what happened?

Animals went back to grazing there.

The sheep returned.

The mountain became just a mountain again.

Everything is only holy if God wills it to be.

And the second God wills it not to be –

It is no longer holy.

The Mistake the People Made About Moshe

משה רבינו (Moshe Rabbeinu ; Moses our teacher) is only holy because he is a messenger of השם (Hashem ; God).

But what happened at the time of the עגל (egel ; the Golden Calf) was that the people made a mistake about משה רבינו (Moshe Rabbeinu ; Moses our teacher).

They slowly began to see him as his own force.

As if he were his own god.

As if he were his own religion.

You can see this in what they said.

They said:

כי זה משה האיש אשר העלנו מארץ מצרים (ki ze Moshe ha'ish asher he'elanu

me'erezt Mitzrayim ; this Moshe, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt).

They said Moshe took us out of Egypt.

And in his absence, they felt they needed something to replace Moshe.

But what do you mean replace Moshe?

Moshe was never the source.

It was always God.

God is still here.

But they were unable to relate to that.

They needed something tangible.

They needed a Moshe.

And you can even hear this reflected in what God says to Moshe:

כי שחת עמך אשר העלית מארץ מצרים (ki shichet amcha asher he'elita me'erezt Mitzrayim ; your people whom you took out of Egypt have corrupted themselves).

It is almost as if God is saying it sarcastically.

“Moshe, the people that you took out of Egypt.”

That is what they think.

They think you took them out.



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

The Real Problem of the Golden Calf

The problem of the עגל (*egel* ; the Golden Calf) was not only that the Jewish people committed idolatry.

The deeper mistake was that they gave holiness to something and detached that holiness from its source — from השם (*Hashem* ; God).

When Moshe realized this, he knew he had to do something dramatic.

He had to shock the people.

He had to show them that nothing in this world is inherently holy.

Everything is an extension of הקדוש ברוך הוא (*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* ; the Holy One blessed be He).

Even the synagogue.

The synagogue is holy.

But why is it more holy than your house?

Your house is also holy.

Learning גמרא (*Gemara* ; the central text of the Talmud) is important.

But so is שלום בית (*shalom bayit* ; peace in the home).

Who said that God prefers you to sit and learn גמרא all night if your wife needs you?

Where did you get that idea?

The same God who said learn תורה (*Torah* ; Divine teaching) also said love your wife and treat her with respect.

Sometimes a person turns תורה learning into its own religion.

If a person studies but is not connecting to God through the learning, the learning becomes its own intellectual exercise.

The תורה says:

ושכנתי בתוכם
(*v'shachanti b'tocham* ; I will dwell among them).

Holiness is not in the object.

Holiness is in you connecting to the One who gives holiness.

Why Moshe Had to Break the Tablets

When the people began following Moshe as if he were the source, they also created the calf and said:

אלה אלו-היך ישראל
(*eleh eloh-echa Yisrael* ; these are your gods, Israel).

Moshe realized they were about to make the same mistake with the tablets.

If he brought the tablets down intact, they would look at them and say:

“These are holy tablets.”

They would begin to worship the tablets themselves.

So Moshe broke them.

He was trying to show them:

These tablets are nothing.

They are just stones.



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

They are holy only if they represent the will of God.

If they are not observed, they mean nothing.

They are just stones.

The Second Tablets

Something fascinating happens later.

After the breaking of the tablets, God says to Moshe:

פסל לך שני לוחות אבנים
(*psal lecha shnei luchot avanim* ; carve for yourself two tablets of stone)

And:

וכתבתי על הלוחות את הדברים אשר היו על הלוחות הראשונים
(*v'chatavti al haluchot et hadvarim asher hayu al haluchot harishonim* ; I will write on the tablets the same words that were on the first tablets).

Our rabbis point out something interesting about the word אשר (*asher*).

The word אשר contains the word אשריך (*ashrecha* ; praiseworthy are you).

The גמרא (*Gemara* ; Talmud) explains that God said to Moshe:

ישר כוחך ששיברת
(*yashar kochacha sheshibarta* ; well done for breaking them).

In other words:

“Good job Moshe.”

God praises Moshe for breaking the tablets.

And these words of approval appear exactly in the context where God commands the second

tablets.

First Tablets vs Second Tablets

Which tablets were holier?

The first ones were made by God.

The second ones were made by man.

You would think the first ones were holier.

But those first tablets — as holy as they were — ended up broken on the ground.

Why?

Because they were given to a people who were practicing idolatry.

And when idolatry is happening, the tablets become worthless.

Just stone.

But the second tablets were given after תשובה (*teshuvah* ; repentance).

Now the people were reconnecting to God.

So even though the tablets were carved by Moshe, they became truly holy.

God was essentially telling Moshe:

Put the two tablets side by side.

Which one remains intact?

The tablets made by God but given to a people disconnected from Him?



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

Or the tablets made by man but connected to God through תשובה (*teshuvah* ; repentance)?

Of course the second tablet remains.

And God says again:

ישר כוחך
(*yashar kochacha* ; well done).

Tradition Without God

We have to remember, my friends, that the lesson of the עגל (*egel* ; the Golden Calf) is that everything in life only has meaning because it is connected to God.

But when you detach something from God, things start becoming backwards.

You have people who turn tradition into its own religion.

I have one person who always tells me:

“Rabbi, tradition in Lebanon, in Syria, in the old country — they didn’t put their hands on their children’s heads for כהנים (*kohanim* ; priests). Why are they doing that here?”

“And in the old country they didn’t stand for the rabbi.”

“Tradition, tradition, tradition.”

Maybe yes, maybe no — I don’t know.

But what makes tradition powerful?

Tradition is powerful because God said to observe the tradition.

But God also said to keep שבת (*Shabbat* ; the Sabbath).

God also said to keep כשר (*kasher* ; kosher).

God also said to keep family purity.

Yet many of the same people who

defend tradition are not defending שבת (*Shabbat* ; the Sabbath), not defending כשרות (*kashrut* ; dietary laws), not defending family purity.

So what happened to the tradition?

What happened to the תורה (*Torah* ; Divine teaching)?

The same God who said tradition also said those things.

It is the same God.

But what happens?

We detach it from God.

When One Mitzvah Becomes an Idol

We all make this mistake.

Sometimes we prioritize one set of laws over another.

We say תורה (*Torah* ; Divine teaching) is so important that we begin neglecting people.

But the same God who said learn תורה also said to respect people.

What happened?

The תורה is holy.

But what about the Jew standing next to you?

Or the opposite mistake can happen.

When a person follows one מצוה (*mitzvah* ; commandment) blindly while neglecting others.



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

That מצוה becomes like your idol.

You detach it from God.

You carve out one thing and ignore everything else.

You didn't mean to.

You didn't say it that way.

And I'm not saying that you cannot connect to a particular מצוה.

Of course you can.

Every person can connect to a specific מצוה.

אברהם (Avraham ; Abraham) connected to חסד (chesed ; kindness).

That is fine.

But when you detach that מצוה from the rest of the תורה, when it becomes the only thing that matters, then you have detached it from God.

The COVID Minyan Example

I often give this example.

During COVID, there were renegade מנינים (minyanim ; prayer quorums).

People insisted:

"I have to pray with a מנין (minyan ; quorum of ten for prayer)."

Why do you have to pray with a מנין?

Because God said.

But at that time, the medical authorities and even many rabbis were saying not to gather because it was dangerous.

So now what is God saying?

God is saying: don't pray with a מנין right now.

But people said:

"No. I've prayed with a מנין for fifty years. I must pray with a מנין."

What happened?

They turned מנין into its own god.

But מנין (minyan ; prayer quorum) is nothing by itself.

It is only meaningful because God said so.

And if God says not to do it right now, then it is not holy to do it.

The Story of the Spies

Later in the desert the Jewish people sent twelve spies to scout the land.

Ten of them spoke לשון הרע (lashon hara ; evil speech).

The people believed them.

They cried and said they did not want to go into the land.

So God said:

Fine.

Forty more years in the desert.

But the next day something happened.

The פסוק (pasuk ; verse) tells us that some of the people woke up and said:

"We made a mistake. We are going to Israel."

They decided they would go up to the land.

משה (Moshe ; Moses) told them:



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

Do not go.

God said not to go.

But they said:

“We are sorry. We are doing תשובה (*teshuvah* ; repentance).”

Moshe said:

Do not go.

God said not to go.

But they went anyway.

And they were killed.

What did they do wrong?

It sounds like the ultimate repentance.

Yesterday they refused to go.

Today they want to go.

Isn't that תשובה (*teshuvah* ; repentance)?

But it is not.

Because their original mistake was thinking they knew better than God.

And now they were doing the exact same thing again.

God said do not go.

And they decided they knew better.

Israel Is Holy Only Because God Said

ארץ ישראל (*Eretz Yisrael* ; the Land of Israel) is only holy because God said it is holy.

But if God says not to go there at a certain time, then it is no different from any other land.

It is just land.

Like Russia.

Like Europe.

There is no difference.

So if a person says:

“I live in Israel because it is holy.”

But at the same time they ignore what God said about how to live there, then what does it mean?

Why are you in Israel?

Why not Uganda?

Herzl once suggested Uganda.

So what makes Israel special?

Because God said.

And God also said there are 613 commandments.

The same God who said Israel is holy said that all the מצוות (*mitzvot* ; commandments) are important.

Now of course nobody is perfect.

Everyone is on their own journey.

But at least a person should acknowledge that they want to reach that place.

Segulot and Spiritual Practices

You hear people speak about סגולות (*segulot* ; spiritual remedies).

Say תהלים (*Tehillim* ; Psalms).

Say נשמת (*Nishmat* ; the prayer “Nishmat Kol Chai”).



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

Certain numbers of times.

Beautiful.

But only because these things are connected to God.

The moment you take God out of the picture, the moment the practice becomes its own power, then it becomes something else.

The Uman Example

There are even debates about places.

For example, חכם עובדיה (*Chacham Ovadia* ; Rabbi Ovadia Yosef) was very against going to אומן (*Uman* ; the burial place of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov) on ראש השנה (*Rosh Hashanah* ; the Jewish New Year).

That was his opinion.

You leave your family and travel to a place.

But what is that place?

That place is nothing if it is not aligned with what God wants.

Now if your rabbi says you should go, then go.

Follow your rabbi.

That is fine.

The point is not to say whether to go or not.

The point is that the holiness of the place depends on whether it aligns with what God wants.

The Final Lesson of the Broken Tablets

משה רבינו (*Moshe Rabbeinu* ; Moses our teacher) realized that the Jewish people had turned him into a god.

They turned the calf into a god.

And they were about to turn the tablets into a god.

So he took the holiest objects imaginable.

The לוחות (*luchot* ; the tablets).

And he smashed them on the ground.

As if to say:

“These are nothing.”

“This staff is nothing.”

“I am nothing.”

Everything is only meaningful because of השם (*Hashem* ; God).

And Moshe spent forty years in the desert teaching that message.

It is all about what God wants.

Closing Blessing

May we always be זוכה (*zocheh* ; to merit) to follow the will of God.

May we have the clarity to know what His will is at every moment in time.

Sometimes His will is to go somewhere.

Sometimes His will is not to go somewhere.

But the holiness is always in following what God wants.

השם (*Hashem* ; God) should bless us to stay connected to Him.

Whether it is through people, through things, or through places.



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

בס"ד

And to always remember that those things are holy only when they are used to serve הקדוש ברוך הוא (*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* ; the Holy One blessed be He).

The same principle applies to every aspect of religious life.

A synagogue is

holy only because it is used to serve God. A ספר (*sefer* ; sacred book) is holy only because it carries God's teaching. A מצוה (*mitzvah* ; commandment) is holy only because God commanded it.

Takeaway from the Lecture

The episode of the חטא העגל (*chet ha'egel* ; the sin of the Golden Calf) teaches a deeper mistake than simple idolatry.

The moment we detach something from its connection to God, even something sacred can become its own religion.

The Jewish people did not only create a golden calf – they detached holiness from its source.

This is how עבודה זרה (*avodah zarah* ; idolatry) begins – not always with statues, but with misplaced holiness.

They began to relate to משה רבינו (*Moshe Rabbeinu* ; Moses our teacher) as if he himself were the power, saying:

Moshe broke the tablets to teach the Jewish people that even the holiest stones in the world are nothing if they are not connected to the will of God.

כי זה משה האיש אשר העלנו מארץ מצרים (*ki ze Moshe ha'ish asher he'elanu me'erezt Mitzrayim* ; this Moshe, the man who brought us out of Egypt).

True קדושה (*kedushah* ; holiness) is not in the object.

They needed something tangible, something visible, something they could relate to.

It is in the relationship between a person and the One who gives holiness.

Moshe understood that if the people could turn him into a god, they could also turn the לוחות (*luchot* ; the tablets) into sacred objects independent of God.

Five Shabbat Table Discussion Questions

So he shattered them.

By breaking the tablets, Moshe demonstrated a foundational principle:
Nothing in the world is inherently holy.

1. The Jewish people said:
כי זה משה האיש אשר העלנו מארץ מצרים (*ki ze Moshe ha'ish asher he'elanu me'erezt Mitzrayim* ; this Moshe, the man who brought us out of Egypt).
How does attributing salvation to Moshe instead of to God help explain how the Golden Calf became possible?
2. Moshe shattered the לוחות (*luchot* ; the tablets), even though they were made by God.
What lesson was Moshe trying to teach

Not a person.
Not a place.
Not an object.

Holiness exists only because it is connected to הקדוש ברוך הוא (*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* ; the Holy One blessed be He) and His will.



Inspiring our Souls with the words of Torah

the people
by
breaking
something
so holy?

3. The lecture explains that places like ירושלים (*Yerushalayim* ; Jerusalem) or the כותל (*Kotel* ; the Western Wall) are holy only because God connected His presence to them.
How does this change the way we should think about holy places?
4. The Meshech Chochmah teaches that even a מצוה (*mitzvah* ; commandment) can become distorted if it is separated from the larger will of God.
What are examples where focusing on one religious practice might cause someone to forget other values in the תורה (*Torah* ; Divine teaching)?
5. Moshe spent forty years teaching the Jewish people that everything in life is meaningful only when it is aligned with what God wants.
What are practical ways we can remind ourselves that holiness comes from serving God rather than from objects, traditions, or habits alone?