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**RABBI WEIN'S
WEEKLY
BLOG**

One of the most important albeit only subtly presented messages in this week's Torah reading is that of the enormous influence that current culture fads and beliefs has upon the society of its time. I do not believe that there is any other way for us to review the events of the creation and worship of the Golden Calf by the Jewish people. Amazing in its brazenness and brainlessness, a people witness to a plethora of miracles and Godly revelation itself in a moment of crisis reverts back to paganism and idolatry. The whole idea of worshiping images and statues as though they had life and powers is completely foreign to our society and us. It is not part of our current culture and therefore simply by applying basic logic we are able to see it for the empty falsehood that it is. However were we to live in a culture of paganism and idolatry as did our ancestors when they left Egypt there is no doubt that the Golden Calf could and would speak to us and enlist our thoughtful consideration if not even our allegiance. The Talmud tells us that Menashe, a king of Judah in First Temple times, when in a dream he was questioned by a leading rabbi who lived many centuries after the

death of the king as to how he could believe and worship statues and idols responded: "Had you lived in my generation you also would have raised them of your garment in order to run more quickly to worship those statues and idols." Menashe was a creature of his times and a captive of its prevailing culture. The rabbi who questioned him had other cultural challenges but could no longer relate to the culture that prevailed at the time that Menashe was the king of Judah.

We see many cultural battles on challenges that are present in today's current Jewish world. These cultural battles create passionate feelings on both sides of the questions that they raise. Nevertheless I feel that even a few generations from now our descendants will look back at these cultural challenges and battles in amazement and wonder. They will say about us what we say about the generation that created the Golden Calf - "How could they have been so wrong?" And the answer to that lies in the recognition of the enormous influence that prevailing culture plays in our lives and thoughts. The prevailing culture of liberalism, nonjudgmentalism, tolerance for wickedness and basically immoral behavior has so corroded our judgment and our view of the purpose of our lives that we see everything through a very distorted mirror. Jewish survival, moral growth

and the preservation of the Jewish people and the Jewish State are the actions that should dominate our thoughts and behavior. Passing fads, which so occupy our current media and culture will soon be obsolete as we move on to newer fads and a different type of culture. The Torah attempted and attempts to raise us above temporary cultures and passing fads. Only a traditional lifestyle based on Jewish core values and Torah principles will save us from the mockery of later generations. 🕍