

Moses had no formal title or position. Yet he could mediate and interpret between God and the people. In that respect he had a significant status and was relied upon by the entire nation. Moses went up on Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah. The people expected him to be up there for a specified amount of time. When he did not return the people became anxious. They wanted a mediator between them and God. They thought that Moses had died. They built the golden calf to act as that mediator. So in the strict sense of the term, the calf itself was not considered a god. Yet it was an idol. In that sense, it went against the very foundation of Judaism.

Judaism tends to be fairly conservative in its approach to most of the mitzvot, laws and ordinances. The one exception is idol worship. Concerning idol worship it goes to the extreme. The Hebrew word for prostration is transliterated as yishtachavoo. When you run across this word in the chumash, within just a few verses, something bad is going to happen. It makes you feel as if you do not want to even see the word. Jews do not prostrate. There is a wonderful set of passages in the Talmud. It says that we place no figures, pictures or representations of people, animals or other such things within our sanctuary. Why? Because if a non-Jew should pass by and look into the sanctuary and see people davening (swaying as they pray) and there is a figure in the sanctuary, the angle of the view may make it seem as if the Jew is praying to the figure. We do not wish even non-Jews to get any kind of impression that we may be praying to an idol. Therefore, we place no such figures inside the sanctuary.

In our modern sense we can have many different kinds of idols. Money, land, and other things we