

PARASHAS NITZAVIM

Only Skin Deep

Moshe stands up the last day of his life and delivers his final message to the people. He implores them to follow Hashem's ways with love. To recognize his kindness and goodness, and not to succumb to the seductions and temptations that will inevitably face them as they enter the pagan land of Knaan. He tells them when you enter the land, and you see there dominations and detestable idols, those of wooden stone, and those of silver and gold that they possess. Don't let your heart turn you astray from Hashem, your G - d...

Why did Moshe find it necessary to specify the material from which the idols were made? Furthermore, why list as those of wooden stones, and those of silver and gold? Is there any difference? Surely an idol is an idol.

The commentaries explain, that as humans we naturally judge everything by its appearance. It is exceedingly difficult not to be influenced by the external façade and to recognize the underlined essence of people or things. Moshe knew that the generation of the desert who had lived in the spiritual incubator of Hashem's clouds of glory for forty years would surely dismiss as nonsense the totem poles and carved idols carved out of simple wooden stone. But what if these self same practices were conducted in magnificent gated temples attended by powerful well-dressed and dignified personages. What if there and houses of were not to decrepit hobbles or people shabbily dressed. But they sparkled with all the glitter and glamour of the physical world. Could the people still maintain the strength to reject and maintain their core beliefs?

This was the message that Moshe intended to convey. Whether their icons are of plain wood and stone, or they are appealingly adorned in silver and gold, they are just the same. They are detestable and abominable, whichever way they are gilded.

The atmosphere in the operating room was extremely tense. The young, beautiful girl in her bloom of her youth had been diagnosed with a tumorous growth. Frantically the surgeon was attempting to point the section pump to extra blood seepage. Perspirations poured down his brow. His assistant, a young surgeon was watching all the activity sipping on his coffee. What a beautiful girl he muttered. The surgeon exploded, "You idiot, our head is involved in the sinews and blood

vessels, and you are busy with nonsense, where is your head? This girl's life is hanging in the balance."

Society is constantly bombarding us with images of the external. Let's not be deceived. Beauty is but the handmaiden of substance. It is important that we not be led astray by the allure of the gold and silver. But stay committed and connected to our core beliefs. Not allowing ourselves to lust after the external.

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