The central idea of the reading from the Torah this morning is that which is of principal importance in both the history of theology and religion. It is the idea - the covenant, or contract - which God made with Israel. It is by means of that contract that the relationship between God and Israel was legalized, a contract whereby we are bound to observe the Torah, and God is bound to watch us prosper, with the added provision that if we should fail to live up to our obligations, God is released from His.

Now, the nature of the contract, according to our Sages, is that it is a lifelong, an oath (cf. 32:20). Our ancestors bound themselves, and their descendants - which means us, to by means of an oath, to the terms of the agreement, to observe the commandments as directed by God.

Furthermore, while in general the command of God is for all the commandments, it is directed primarily vs. 5:7. We are to believe in and obey, and not serve any idol.

What essentially happened in the episode related in today's Sidra, is that Moses made Israel give up their strange gods. Moses, acting under command by God, prevailed over the disbelievers in their false ideas.

That would seem simple enough. But there is a logical difficulty here that makes it difficult for us to understand what motivated Moses to this action. We fail to understand his psychology or his logic. And this logical criticism is leveled by the Tosafists, whose authors (I think) pointed out.
Commentary on the Talmud which took hundreds of years to compose (c. 950 B.C. to 1720 C.E.) as follows: If Moses was afraid that his people would degenerate to the point where they would actually commit the worst sin known to man, the violent crime unmentionable, that if it, how could he prevent it by an oath? For violating an oath is indeed wrong, but if a man will stop idolatry, the worst of sins, he surely will feel no compunctions about breaking his word, something which is wrong, but insignificant compared to idolatry. If Moses afraid they would serve idols, surely he should have predicted they would violate their oath, making his people swear, this true. That he would not service idols is an ineffective as well as unnecessary step. That is the question, the critics.

And yet, despite the logical consistency of the Tosafists, despite their accurate analysis, history of the experience of our own times proves that Moses was right and the Tosafists were in error. The fact of irreducible and indisputable fact of our day prove that life is not logical, that men have twisted and distorted and man-handled values so that what is of lesser importance become paramount and what is of greater imp. becomes secondary. Moses was certainly right when he ventured that one day men would hold up and a word important than 57, when they would take the Torah's scale of values and turn it upside down.

Such, indeed, are our times. We have experienced a change in emphasis, a transvaluation of values, we have convinced the wrong stress, the erroneous evaluation, the lopsided perspective.
But why blame ourselves, why not take a deep, long look at ourselves and see how we have fared in keeping our proper perspective, if we have put first things first. I fear we do not aim any better or any cleaner. In the next several weeks we shall have a Yikker service. Have you noticed, if you will, how many remain after the Yikker for the Messiah. Yikker is important, eternal. But it cannot be compared to the Yikker which is sanctified prayer. We substitute for sacrifice, sanctified by love and tradition, a holy obligation by man, a prayer which includes YHWH and the Blessing. The Yikker is what so many Jews are anxious to have. Moses right to the Torah is strong. They reverse almost Jewish values. They prefer sentiment to truth, emotion to tradition, custom to law. We pride ourselves, those who are in our good books, on our honesty, our integrity, yet we shun and kneel and bend to many strange gods. The modern world aims, first to sunder, to the religion, ideology, and man himself to the unholy religion, on day which tells that everything must serve man. This needs no purpose, no direction - religion. Toroh, even God was, so to speak, made to serve us. We keep it, but not to the six.

Such examples could be multiplied a hundredfold.
Thus, for instance, the peaceful + constructive use of atomic energy, recognized through it, is now a prime object of constructive exploitation. The common yearning for all men for peace and the maintenance of this interest and fear are more important for mankind. This readiness of values finds most excellent expression in the situation in France where side by side, there stand a grand and splendid tomb for Napoleon, a comparatively insignificant monument to Louis Pasteur, one of the greatest benefactors of mankind.

Or take attitudes towards Jews. The biased historian Töynbee compares the situation 150,000 Arab refugees to the Holocaust which wiped out 93 of the Jewish people to the mind of this insensitive, heartless historian, they are exactly equivalent. No one maintains that it is tragic for 150,000 people to live in poverty, squatter on a narrow strip of land. But, new 9-4, how blind + heartless does my heart to be to compare that to cruel, barbaric, premeditated + cold-blooded murder 60 times that number! Moses was, unfortunatelly right. Our world has lost its capacity to evaluate things properly. Our thinking is top-down. Our understanding in will, our logic is non-existent + our ears, finally. When a man Töynbee's report can not to say publicly that the Zionists / Israeli have been so cruelly + so unhumanely as the Nazis!! Call him an instinctive anti-semitist if you will. But what about the thousands of his readers who naively swallow this mitigated non-reconstructed version in the gulf?!!

Yes, Moses was right. We have allowed the serious to think to influence us, the secondary we have hallowed or sanctified.
I was recently told a parable which gained entrance into a hardware store and decided to give expression to his discarded prices. The manager, and so he did me thing — namely, switching the price tags off display. So that customers who came to the store were surprised and amused to observe that Saturn was 2 for 59, nails 25 each and a gallon paint cost 14. That is what has happened to us. We have switched the price tags on god's valuables. We have cheapened the dear, we have raised the price of the insignificant.

And in Moses’s recognition of man's perverse nature, lies the solution. If they value the little more than the prohibitions so then use the former to secure the latter— make them swear not to bend the knee to an idol. Such will be our approach to those who have lost the perspective of Torah. Give them yizkor, maybe they will stay for yizkor. But then want a flag, perhaps they will rise to insurrection. Let them participate in a symphony, perhaps they will make a Leader. From the Haunted they will grow to the piqued; from the latter to the former; from the linear to sincere penitence, to yizkor, from a moment to...
include them within. The framework of an honest, intellectual sabbath to Torah. We will see them thrive. Live them in the broad, clear

or purposes over 2

we shall learn them well the law (1961). If our Taylor

that God is to pity and bless. The important include

the secondary — the law that when has before him two Torahs

which require different blessings. We is a more important than

the other. That he must recite the blessing over the 174, so

that will cover the 106 as well.

loyal to the 174 — the important values — and

mindful of the 106, the lesser values, we shall recapture

the 106, the blessing of Torah. No greater tribute

can be paid to the memory of our father Moses than

to prove that as far as we are concerned, he was

wrong, and the Tosafists were right.

1961: another example of "first things first" — when war threatened Europe

in 1938 it was uppermost in everyone's mind — anger of Nations

was debating — the Ruman troops!