

In *Parashat Ki Tisa*, the Jewish people have just stood at Mount Sinai and heard the Ten Commandments. Their leader Moses (*Moshe*) then announces that he's going up the mountain for 40 days, and the people have nothing to do but wait.

The people do, however, decide to take action, as their waiting grows longer day after day. They gather around Aaron, and say to him; "Make us a god who shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him" (Exodus 32:1). They bring Aaron their precious metals and jewelry, and he casts a golden calf from them – a new God. Some of the people even begin to say; "This is your god, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4).

God told Moses that the Jewish People had sinned and fashioned a golden calf. Moses came down from atop Mount Sinai and saw the golden calf, as well as the merriment and dancing which accompanied it. His anger flared up and he shattered the tablets of the covenant (*Luchot Ha-Brit*).

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. If the Jews had just witnessed God's awesome power demonstrated by the Ten Plagues, the splitting of the Red Sea, and the revelation at Mount Sinai, how could these same people turn around and worship a golden calf?
2. The Jews were searching for a leader. Moses, who they could always trust and follow, had not come down from the mountain and they panicked. They longed for a connection with God but were afraid that they had lost it, and in response, decided to build an idol. Do you think that the actions of the Jewish People were rooted in a misunderstanding of what one's relationship to God entails?
3. Moses had been waiting for a long time atop the mountain, and he must have been furious when he saw his people acting against the commandments of God. Why did Moses not break the *Luchot Ha-Brit* as soon as God told him that the Jews had made a new God?

Additionally, here is a more abstract question I have been pondering over the course of this week. Why do we even yearn for a relationship with God to begin with? The Jewish people were not lacking in a leader to admire, as they had Moses, and when he was gone they had Aaron to follow in his stead. The Jewish People, rather, desired a connection with something greater than themselves, a desire which many of us attempt to fulfill to this day, and at times we must ask ourselves if we are truly putting our energy, thoughts, and actions, towards God, or to our own false idols.

Let us all strive for that relationship and connection with God on this Shabbat.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Koas