



Torah Reflections on *Parashat Ki Tissa*

Exodus 30:11 – 34:35

20 Adar, 5767

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The Torah portion *Ki Tissa** is filled with the dramatic story of Moses' ascension to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. As you may recall, while on Mount Sinai, Aaron and the children of Israel build a golden calf. Both God and Moses become enraged. Moses breaks the tablets and then re-ascends the mountain to receive them again.

The portion is filled with enriching lessons and is compelling in the way it is written. One compelling aspect is the way in which God sees the mistakes of the Children of Israel, talks with Moses about them, and then comes to forgive the Children of Israel and returns Moses to them with a second set of tablets containing the Ten Commandments. That process can inform how we come to forgive ourselves and others around us.

First, God sees the mistake of building the golden calf and is angered by it. It seems that all acts of forgiveness begin with acknowledging that with which we feel angry and hurt. Second, God, Moses and the Children of Israel talk. They exchange harsh words, but stay in communication. It seems as well that even in hurt and anger, we need to stay in communication, even when it is hard. Third, God asks Moses to return to Mount Sinai and there gives him another set of the Ten Commandments. Moses returns to the Children of Israel with a face that radiates light. Acts of forgiveness can leave us feeling relieved, with their power to release us from difficult burdens and to give us a chance to move forward. Interestingly, despite their mistakes, the Children of Israel still receive the Ten Commandments, with all their expectation of relationship with God. Ultimately, any act of forgiveness contains an agreement; a covenant, which binds us together in healthier relationship. It is the memory of the mistake, and the process of reconciliation, by which forgiveness forms a framework for clearer relationship.

May we be inspired to learn from our mistakes and allow forgiveness to transform our relationships.

*Ki Tissa means "when you take" and refers to the taking of the census of the Children of Israel.

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