

### **Parashat Ki Tissa: The real sin of the Golden Calf**

The main subject of Parashat Ki Tissa is the famous episode of the Golden Calf. Moses was on the top of Mount Sinai receiving the 10 commandments, and the people of Israel were down at the foot of the mountain, doing a great party and worshipping a golden calf. We know the story very well, it was maybe the most severe sin of our people through History. But thanks to Moses, God forgave them, the covenant was renewed, new tablets, and a happy ending.

But I have a question for you: Knowing what happened with the Golden Calf, can you tell me what was the sin of the people? What is that they did wrong? It is true that is idolatry. But what I want to show to you today, is that behind this terrible sin of Idolatry, in the story of the golden calf there is an additional sin that we don't use to talk about... it is like a hidden sin, and the reason I want to share it with you is because that sin has a lot of implications for our lives today, not especially as Jews, but as human beings.

So first of all let's think together, what was the reason the people decided to build the Golden Calf? What was their motivation? The Torah says: *"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron and said unto him, 'Arise, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what has become of him'".*

The people saw that Moses delayed to come down so they probably feared: "Where is Moses, the guy who took us out of Egypt? We did everything because of him, so now what we are going to do?" And the rabbis in the Talmud tried to figure out what does it mean that Moses "delayed". How much he was late? And after doing some calculations, they arrive to the conclusion that Moses came down exactly one day after the day he told the people he was going to come back. The people of Israel worried, became to fear and they built the Golden Calf, commit Idolatry because they saw that Moses was late for one day...

So which is the hidden sin here? Impatience... Only because Moses took one more day they cried, feared and built an image of God (or maybe of Moses). Why it was so difficult to think that something could happen in the way back and was the cause of the delay? Maybe because he was eighty years old it took to him one more day? They didn't think about that and because of only one day they thought: This is the end!!

And even though I cannot say that impatience is a more severe sin than idolatry, in this context, the impatience of the people was the real motivation for them to build the Calf, more than the willing to commit idolatry. And the same way this sin, or weakness, of impatience had several bad consequences for our people in the past, the same happens with us: We live in a generation that not only suffers from impatience, but we even transformed impatience in a virtue.

Technology today pushes us to expect an almost immediate response for every one of our needs. We have a computer, but if the computer is not enough fast, we change it. Why? Because is too slow, and slow means that instead of waiting for one second for a program to open, we need to wait three...

But this idea of instantaneous response to our needs is also present in our social life, or even in the way we chose our partners for life, like the “speed-dating” system. And also in the attitude towards our Jewish tradition. There are several “Thirty minutes Pesach Seder”! A whole rich tradition, so important, with so beautiful traditions, and songs, and challenges, memories to create, reduced to a half an hour minutes experience.

Everything which is important in life demands time and patience. I once heard a very interesting commentary about Moses in the burning bush. Moses realized that the bush was being burned but it was not being consumed. But, how much time it takes to realize that a tree which is burning is not being consumed? You need to look, to wait, to be curious, to dedicate time... It is not something you can realize in seconds. Moses was attracted by something that takes time, for what you need to be patient, you need to realize the moment, and so he was able to discover God.

Unfortunately, we don't have a Moses who can come and save us, but we have a real gift we received from God in order to fight these times of impatience, superficiality, emptiness and loneliness. And that gift is called Shabbat. It can be a big coincidence, or maybe not, that the same Parasha about the sin of the Golden Calf, about idolatry but also about impatience, is the Parasha when we are told about the mitzvah of observing Shabbat.

We already knew about the idea of Shabbat. But it is in our Parasha, in the middle of the work of the constructions of the sanctuary, when God told our people: Stop working, this is a special day, you can't work, you need time for yourself. We live during all the week trying to conquer time, to save time, we suffer from impatience. But when Shabbat comes, we enjoy time; we liberate ourselves from the need to do many things at the same time. Shabbat allows us to have a day for ourselves, for our family, we can't use computers, we can't use cell phones, we meet real people at the synagogue, you are with your community, you share, you enjoy, you are close to the Torah and to God...

Shabbat is a reminder that at least once a week, we need to slow down, to value slowness and not speed. We are not the generation of the desert, but we are, more or less, as impatient as they were, and that invites us to a life of superficiality, ignorance and loneliness.

So let's try to keep Shabbat, to invest time in it... To have a Shabbat dinner, to invite people, to be with the family, to do different activities in those days, to study and to sing, so we can find richness and meaning in our lives, to be close to God, to find love and care with our friends and loved ones.

Shabbat Shalom!