



KI TISA

This week's reading of Ki Tisa contains the infamous story of the Chet Ha-Egel (the sin of the Golden Calf).

Moshe was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments. The Almighty related to him all that had happened in the creating of the Golden Calf and with the worshipping of it. Then G-d tells Moshe that He wishes to completely destroy the nation, because, "I have seen this people and they are a stiff-necked people" (Exodus 32:9). The people had just broken the first two of the Ten Commandments, and now G-d claims He wishes to destroy us because we are stubborn? How is this to be explained?

Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Kelm explains that the main fault of the Jewish people was that they were indeed stubborn. That is, they lacked the flexibility to admit that they made a mistake. When someone is flexible, even if he makes many mistakes, he will regret them and will change. However, if a person is inflexible, when he makes a mistake, he will not repent and improve. At the Golden Calf, the people involved were not even willing to admit that they had made an error. They were absolutely convinced that they had done the right thing, in complete ignorance of having been told otherwise by their teacher and leader. It was this specific problem which angered G-d, much more so than the actual sin itself.

While there is also a time to be inflexible, such as when upholding values and maintaining one's honesty and integrity, it is important to be flexible to improve oneself and realize that we do things wrong at times.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Cohen