

Adonai, Adonai: A Yom Kippur Drash

Based on *Parashat Ki Tissa* Exodus 32 - 34

On *Yom Kippur*, God moves from the throne of judgment to the throne of compassion. After we have asked for forgiveness from others and been thorough and exacting with ourselves, we are able to open our hearts and allow love to heal our wounds.

We all remember the story of the golden calf, the man-made god formed when we grew impatient with Moshe's 40 day sojourn on the Mountain. There we were at Sinai, hearing and seeing the great power of the Holy One, and we made an idol to worship! Moshe was furious upon his return from the mountain, and he smashed the tablets engraved with the Ten Utterances. God also was furious and wanted to destroy the Israelites.

Now Moshe had a very special relationship with God. They spoke easily and were good at calming each other down. Moshe asked God, "If this stiff-necked people were destroyed, what would the Egyptians think?" God thought about it, reconsidered the threat of destruction, and moved from the throne of judgment to the throne of compassion. She even decided to offer the Israelites a second chance with the tablets, and summoned Moshe to the Mountain again ?

Moshe had one compulsion, and that was to see, with his very own eyes, the face of God. She tried to oblige him and said to him, "My face will go with you and guide you."

But Moshe begged, "Please, let me behold Your Glory."

God responded, "I love you Moshe, and I'd do just about anything for you. I'll

make all my goodness pass before you, and I will say My name, and show you My kindness and compassion, but no one can see My face and live. I have an idea, though. You sit up there between those rocks so you are shielded from My light and you will be able to see My back as I pass by."

Moshe was disappointed, but did as he was told. He carved two new tablets of stone and then sat between the rocks. A cloud descended and the voice of God spoke:

"Adonai, Adonai - Breath of Life, Infinite Spirit

El Rahum v'hanun - a God compassionate and gracious

Erekh apayim - slow to anger

V'rav hesed v'emet - abounding in kindness and truth

Notzer hesed la'alafim - offering love in reward for your goodness to the
thousandth generation

Noseh avon, vafesha, v'hata'ah, v'nakeh - forgiving sin and granting pardon...

Moshe watched, and listened, and was filled with awe. It was not God's face that he had seen, but he had been blessed to look directly through the eyes and heart of the Holy One. It was as if he had donned the mask of the Creator. Her eyes were his, and there were starbursts of light in every atom of creation. Golden alephs danced in spirals of eternal possibility. Their hearts were one as the mountains sang with the angels in a harmony that kindled holiness in the universe.

The fire of compassion consumed his being and the glory of love shone from his face. And when he came down from the mountain, "He was not aware that the skin

of his face was radiant."

According to Tradition, it was *Yom Kippur* day that Moshe returned with the second tablets. On *Yom Kippur*, and every day, may we all allow ourselves to see through the compassionate eyes of God and look with love into the faces of each others.