



# *Ki Tisa*

**There is nothing quite like being there.**

This powerful message is conveyed to us in Parshat Ki Tisa.

It is a well-known story: after forty days and nights, Moses, who had received the Ten Commandments from Hashem, is told by the Almighty, “Lech-red” (go down), “ki shichet ammecha” (your people have sinned). They have turned away from the path that I asked them to follow. They are worshipping an idol.

Moses then descended from Mount Sinai, and when he personally witnessed the worshipping of the golden calf, he was so enraged and upset that he famously smashed the tablets.

The Midrash asks a great question: Moses already knew what was happening, because on the top of Mount Sinai, God told him everything. Why didn't he smash the tablets then?

Why did he only wait until he saw what was happening with his own eyes?

And the answer of the Midrash is so important for us to hear. The answer is: “Eino domeh shemi'ah l're'iyah.” Hearing about something is not the same as seeing it with your own eyes.

And this is such an important message. Who did Moses hear about this from? It wasn't just anybody. He heard about this from Almighty God Himself. It was absolutely true.

However, it was only when he witnessed the worshipping of the golden calf for himself that

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the depths of his feelings came to the fore, and he smashed the tablets.

In post-pandemic times, I have found it absolutely remarkable to see how, globally, everybody's been in such a rush to forget about the pandemic. And I think it's understandable. Human nature is that we want to move forward with enormous resilience. We want to get on with the rest of our lives and not dwell on that traumatic period.

However, one of the downsides of this is the fact that we aren't always properly learning from the lessons of the pandemic. And one of the strongest lessons of all was the power and importance of human interaction — of seeing things for ourselves.

Thanks to Zoom, during that exceptionally challenging time, we were able to digitally connect with people, but now, thank God, we have an opportunity for the real thing.

So, let's therefore appreciate the enormous gift that Hashem has given us: to interact properly with others, to be in their presence, to engage with them socially, to attend events, to come together as a community, to come for shul services. Because ultimately, from our parsha, we learn: there's nothing quite like being there.

Shabbat Shalom.