

» torah portion

God, I Want To Know You

Parshat Ki Tisa: *Exodus* 30:11-34:35;
I Kings 18:1-18:39.

Dawn at Sinai

Now that we take our phones with us everywhere we go, there's an immediacy about our communications. Everything has to be done right here, right now. No waiting.

I feel like in the "olden days" of my youth, things were slower. People left messages and waited for you to get back to them. It might even take a day or two. But not today. And frankly, not even back in biblical times (and probably not even when I was a child).

It turns out that in our Torah portion, Ki Tisa, where we read the story of the golden calf, the Israelites also needed immediate gratification and response. Still insecure of their new relationship with God, still anxious and unsure and filled with doubt, the Israelites stood at the base of the mountain of Sinai, waiting, waiting for Moses. Waiting. Waiting. Forty days is a long time to wait.

And after what seems like forever, they are tired of waiting. Under Aaron's authority, they take off their gold jewelry and fashion it into a golden calf. When it is done, Aaron, calls out, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt ... Tomorrow will be a festival to Adonai!"

He has deemed this calf god and called it by God's name. It is heretical; it is idolatrous; it is sacrilegious, but it's not hard to understand why it happened. The people needed a physical representation of God to prove God's existence, to pacify them, to console them, to make them secure in their belief.

But ironically, this idol is contrary to everything that God is and contrary to everything that Judaism holds dear.

This is the situation that Moses returns to when he comes down the mountain. He has to pacify God. Angry as he is toward his brother and toward the people, he is forced to intervene on their behalf.

But then, he surprises me because Moses wants to see God, too. To God, he says, "Now if I have truly gained your favor, let me know your ways ...

Let me behold Your Presence!" And, interestingly enough, God complies. "There is a little place near Me, a cleft in the rock. Go station yourself there, and I will let My Presence pass before you."



Rabbi Marla Hornsten

It is a beautiful and moving passage, intimate and personal, and so completely opposite of the scene with the golden calf. The people are ready to reject God, while Moses wants to know God. By asking to see God's Presence, he doesn't need to validate God's existence, as did the people.

Instead he is saying, I want a stronger relationship. I want to confirm this covenant that we have made.

Essentially, he is saying: God, I want to know you. We also respond to this need, as an innermost desire of humankind. We want to know God personally and intimately.

Can we ask, as Moses did, "O God, let me behold Your Presence?"

I believe we can if our intention is right. We need only start by talking to God.

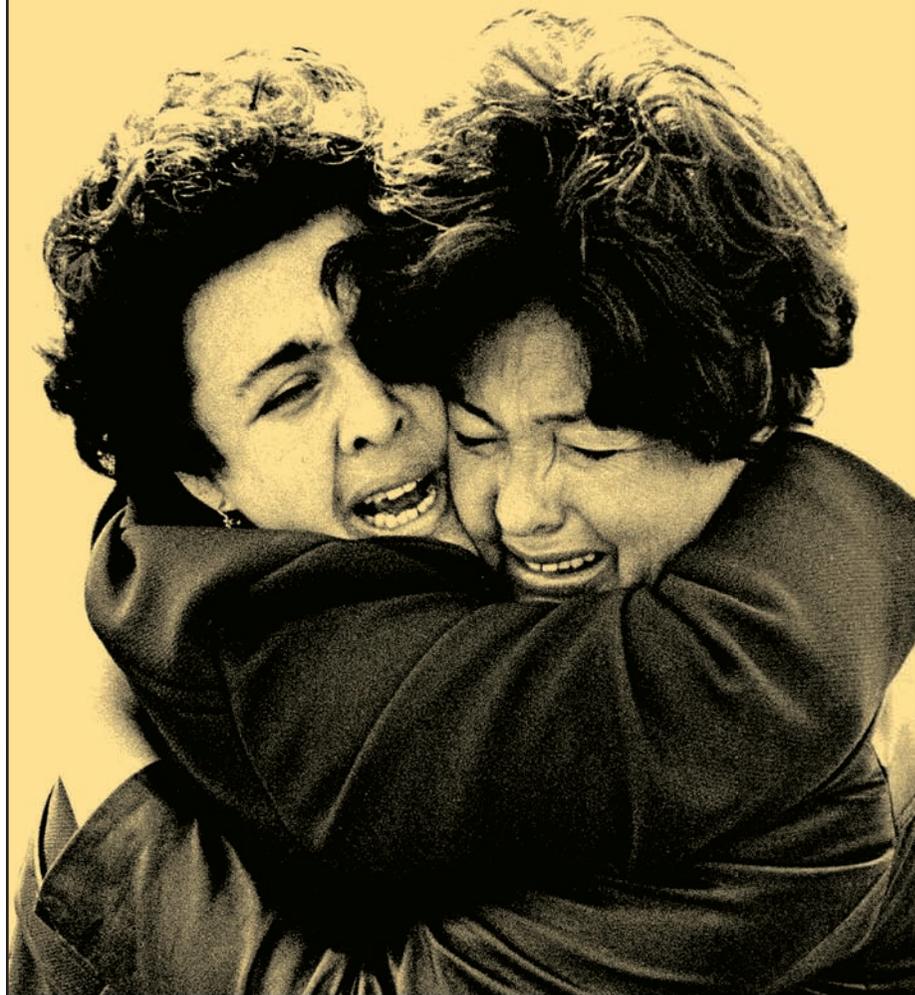
And once we have made that connection, our relationship with everything else becomes deeper, more meaningful and more powerful. It gives us a whole new way of looking at things.

I know it's hard to find the time to sit down for a heart-to-heart with God. But I recently heard of an interesting technique that really seems to work: Talk to God before ... before, the world wakes up, before the kids wake up, before the onslaught of the real world catches us.

You might have to wake up a few minutes earlier but talk to God before ... and when the day does start up, everything will be a littler clearer, a little more manageable, a little more secure, and perhaps we'll realize that it's OK to wait a minute or a day, (but probably not 40 days) for an answer. *

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