



## **NEWSCAST 5. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

With the hordes of Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea behind them and with some of their earlier difficulties in the desert overcome, the Hebrew tribes now encounter the most serious crisis of their emerging nationhood.

The golden calf insurrection challenged not only the leadership of Moses but the very concept of God's covenant with Israel. Worship of the golden calf represented a reversion to the pagan religion of Egypt — at the very time that Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. The idea of an invisible God was just as unique in Moses' time as it had been in the time of Abraham and for a people enslaved for generations in Egypt, an unseen God was still difficult to accept. This perhaps accounts for the whole history of opposition and rebellion which characterized Israel's wanderings in the desert.

But the golden calf episode does not diminish the lasting importance of that unique aspect of Mosaic Law — The Ten Commandments. God's revelation on Mount Sinai became a legacy which set the standards of civilization from that time on.

This period also marks the beginning of the Iron Age in the ancient Near East which will revolutionize warfare and commerce. Iron chariots, armor and weapons would prove to be more effective than their bronze counterparts and the reduction in demand for bronze would progressively damage the economy of Egypt — a major supplier of copper. In Canaan too, the control of iron will soon be decisive in determining the balance of power between Israelites and Philistines.

**Biblical references: Exodus, Chapters 13-32**