

Scene 3

Sunburn

**INTERIOR - EVENING
LIVINGSTON FAMILY LIVING ROOM**

GRANNY IRIS

So after God made his covenant with Abraham, they settled down in Canaan.
And even though the family grew, things didn't always go well for them.
There was a famine in the land.

SADIE

What's a famine?

BETH

That's when there's not enough food to eat.

SETH

With dread, hiding his snack dramatically
You mean...no snacks?! Say it ain't so!

GRANNY IRIS

The famine was so bad, they had to stay in Egypt for a while. And a while turned into a long while. And all the while, the family kept growing and growing. Eventually, a Pharaoh rose to power who didn't know who all these Israelites were or why they were here.

SOPH

Let me guess...this Pharaoh wasn't exactly a nice guy?

GRANNY IRIS

Not at all. He enslaved the Israelites and made their lives unbearable.

FRANK

Rubbing his hands together excitedly
Okay, now we're getting to the good part!
Looks like we got ourselves a good old-fashioned villain for the story!

FRANC

Frank, you simple, simple man. Pharaoh wasn't "the bad guy". His policies were likely influenced by economic needs and political concerns. His fear of an uprising from the Israelites-

FRANK

Interrupting him
I'm sorry Franc, are you defending the bad guy?

FRANC

All I'm saying is that it isn't a simple-

FRANK

Interrupting again, pointing at Franc and looking around the room as if to warn everyone
Pharaoh lover! We got a pharaoh lover over here!

SAM

So how do the Israelites get out of this? Can't they just, like...leave?

GRANNY IRIS

That's where Moses comes in. God called him to confront Pharaoh and set the Israelites free.

SID

To Gilgamesh, eyeing uncle Franc warily

Don't worry Gilgamesh...if Pharaoh ever caught you, I'd get my sword and set you free!

GRANNY IRIS

Only Moses didn't use a sword...God was the one fighting for His people. He sent ten plagues on Egypt and parted the Red Sea so the Israelites could escape.

MARK

Sounds like a pretty epic road trip. "Pack your bags, it's adventure time!"

BETH

More like pack your bags and run.

SADIE

But Granny...where did they go to?

GRANNY IRIS

They began heading towards Canaan, the land that God had promised to give Abraham. And their first stop on the journey was Mount Sinai, where God made a new covenant with them.

SOPH

Oh, I think I know this one...the Ten Commandments, right?

FRANK

Thou shalt not drink, smoke, or chew or go with girls who do.

MARK

I think there's a little more to it than that...

FRANC

That is correct, Mark. There are actually 613 commandments in the books of the law...from daily living to moral laws to dietary restrictions.

He claps excitedly
Oh, I just LOVE rules!!

GRANNY IRIS

Well, these Laws weren't just for the sake of having a lot of rules. They were supposed to set Israel apart as God's chosen people - the people through which He would bless the whole world. The Law was part of this new covenant - an obligatory covenant where God would bless and prosper Israel and they would reciprocate by living in accordance with His commands.

SETH

I bet that went over well...

EXTERIOR - EVENING
ISRAELITE CAMP, MOUNT SINAI

Cut over to a tent at the base of Mount Sinai where Miriam and Aaron are sitting, talking in hushed tones about Moses, who has been gone for 40 days now

ISRAELITE 1

Face it, Aaron...he's not coming back.
He probably fell off a cliff or got struck by lightning up there.

ISRAELITE 4

And without Moses to lead us, we need someone...SOMETHING to go before us!
It's dangerous out here! We need some gods to protect us!

ISRAELITE 2

It's like my pappy always said. When there's no gods around...make one!

ISRAELITE 3

Yeah, Aaron! Make us a god we can see! Maybe a golden calf?

ISRAELITE 1

I've always been partial to horseshoe crabs.

ISRAELITE 3

To the fellow idolater
Now, now, let's not get fancy.

Starting a chant
Golden calf! Golden calf!

ISRAELITE 1 & 3 & 4

Joining together and growing in intensity
Golden calf! Golden calf!

Aaron rubs his temples and exits the tent, bumping into Miriam in his haste.
They continue chanting as Aaron walks away.

AARON

Ah! Miriam! Any word from Moses?!

MIRIAM

Flatly
For the fourteenth time today: no.
Our brother has not yet returned from the mountain.

She hears the chanting and looks over at the Israelites
What's going on over there?

AARON

They are driving me CRAZY, Miriam! Everyone is just...ants at a picnic!
If Moses doesn't come back soon...

MIRIAM

He'll be back, just stay calm.

AARON

Stressed and frantic
Calm?! I AM CALM. I am easy-breezy!
Everyone else needs to MATCH MY LEVEL OF CALM!!

MIRIAM

Trying to calm him down
Okay, okay! Take it easy, bro. What's got you so upset?

AARON

They keep asking me to make a god they can see and touch. They think Moses is done for and that we need a golden calf to lead us through the wilderness.

MIRIAM

A golden calf?
I'm partial to horseshoe crabs myself.

AARON

Miriam, this is serious! What are we gonna do?
If we don't give them what they want...

He drags his finger across his throat

MIRIAM

...they'll slowly drag their fingers across our throats?

AARON

No, no, they'll...

He mimics being hung, sticking his tongue out and crossing his eyes

MIRIAM

Even more confused
They'll...make weird faces at us?

AARON

Miriam! They're gonna kill us if we don't make them an idol!

MIRIAM

Sarcastically
Oh, well then, by all means, let's abandon all our principles.
I mean, this is the very first time our lives have been threatened, after all.

Seriously, Aaron! After all we've been through?
Ten plagues in Egypt, walking through the Red Sea with chariots chasing us...
Following a cloud by day and a fire by night through the wilderness.
Eating Manna from Heaven when we were starving!

She gestures to the two Israelites not standing too far off
I can't believe Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum have you running scared now!

AARON

He sighs
Would you say we've had a rough go of it?

MIRIAM

Mhm.

AARON

And Moses is gone.

MIRIAM

Mhm

AARON

And everyone is a bit...on edge.

MIRIAM

What's your point, bro?

AARON

Throwing up his hands in frustration

My point is just give them what they want! Just this once!

A little golden calf and boom, crisis averted. Then maybe no one gets...

He chops his neck with his hand, imitating beheading

MIRIAM

Confused

Again with the...?

She shakes it off

Aaron, you can't be serious. You really think it'll stop there? It never does!

Today it's a little golden calf, tomorrow it's a feast, then a little wine, a little dancing...

Next thing you know...

ISRAELITES 1, 2, 3, & 4

Chanting once again

Golden calf! Golden calf! Golden calf!

ISRAELITE 1

I brought these nice golden bracelets with us from Egypt. We could melt those down!

ISRAELITE 2

Oh, and I've got a whole box full of nose rings!

ISRAELITE 4

Eww, nose rings are so twelfth century.

But you know, I hear hairpins are making a comeback.

AARON

Turning from the Israelites back to Miriam

You see? They're not going to let up. They're like jackals with a bone!

MIRIAM

Pleading with him

Don't give into the madness, Aaron. We follow God! Not some golden cow.

AARON

Looking toward the mountain

But what if Moses never comes back?! He's been up there for 40 days! The people need something, Miriam. Anything! Maybe we could just give them a *teensy* little calf. Just enough to tide them over until Moses comes back! It doesn't have to mean anything!

MIRIAM

But we don't *need* a golden calf. Or any idol for that matter.
We need faith. And patience!

ISRAELITE 3

Loudly, to Aaron

You're the high priest, right?! Aren't you supposed to help us?
We want a god, NOW!

ISRAELITE 2

Wearing a stupid hat

Hey, maybe I could be the high priest...

They both laugh cruelly

AARON

Resigned and defeated

I'm sorry, Miriam. I don't have a choice.

He moves toward the crowd and starts collecting gold from them

MIRIAM

Calls after him

Don't do this, Aaron!

AARON

Still busily collecting gold, not looking at her

It's just a statue, Miriam. It will get us through until Moses gets back. You'll see!

ISRAELITE 1

As Aaron collects gold and works to craft the idol
Now are we really set on golden calf?
Because I still think horseshoe crab has some merit.

Aaron collects gold from them and puts them in a brazier, turning his back to the audience as he crafts an idol from the melted gold. He pulls a small, crude golden calf from the fires.

AARON

Holding up the idol
Here he is! This is the lord your god who brought you up out of Egypt!

ISRAELITE 4

Woo-hoo! It's party time!

The Israelites start celebrating at the feet of the golden calf
Moses enters and sees what is going on
Moses throws the tablets of the law down and they shatter into pieces
The party abruptly ends

MOSES

Approaching Aaron angrily
Aaron! What on earth are you thinking?!
Why would you lead these people into so great a sin?!

AARON

Moses! Please, don't be angry...
You know how stubborn these people are!

Imitating the Israelites

They said "make us gods, make us gods! We want a calf! No, we want a horseshoe crab!"

Laughs weakly in the face of Moses's anger

So, so I just said "okay, whoever has jewelry, give it to me. And they did, and I threw it in this fire and ha! Whadaya know? Out came this calf!"

MIRIAM

Oh, is that how it happened?

MOSES

Without a word, he takes the golden calf, smashes it to pieces, grinds it into powder, sprinkles the powder into water and forces one of the Israelites nearby to drink it

*Sudden cut to the Livingston family as Moses and the Israelites freeze-frame
They slowly leave the stage as the lights dim and the Livingstons speak*

**INTERIOR - EVENING
THE LIVINGSTON FAMILY LIVING ROOM**

SAM

Shocked

Wait. He did WHAT?!

SETH

Pushing his snack aside

I think I've lost my appetite...

GRANNY IRIS

Well, Moses did have some anger issues...but God takes sin very seriously. Sometimes it's shocking to us how God punishes sin. We want him to be a kind and cozy grandpa in the sky...but idolatry, violence, injustice...God can't just let those things stand, especially among His people.

SOPH

But doesn't the Bible say that God is love?

Why would a loving God punish sin?

GRANNY IRIS

You're right, Soph. God is love. That's one of His attributes.

But do you know what God's most prominent attribute is?

SOPH

What?

GRANNY IRIS

God is holy.

SAM

What does that mean? That He's like...really, really pure and good and stuff?

GRANNY IRIS

Well, holiness isn't just moral purity. When the Bible says that God is holy, it means that He is unlike anything else in all creation. He's the one and only being with the power to make a world so full of beauty and life. He is utterly unique. God's love, His faithfulness, His loving-kindness, all come from this fundamental attribute of holiness. In everything that God says and does and establishes, He is holy.

SOPH

Okay...so God is uniquely powerful. What does that have to do with punishing sin?

GRANNY IRIS

Think of holiness like the sun. It's unique in our solar system. It's the singular source of warmth and light for our world...but it's also dangerous. And the closer you get to the sun, the more dangerous it is.

FRANK

Phew, ain't that the truth! I got this sunburn in Cabo once...

FRANC

Frank, now is not the time for recounting your tales of island frivolities!

FRANK

Oh right...sorry. Please continue.

GRANNY IRIS

Well, that's actually an interesting comparison, Frank! Because to stand in the presence of a holy God *is* dangerous. Not because he's bad, but because he's so good! As sinful creatures, we just can't withstand Him.

And if this holy God was going to dwell among His people, Israel, that puts them in close proximity to the "sun" of his holiness. To borrow your illustration, Frank, the Israelites were going to need some sunscreen.

BETH

In realization

So that's why God gave them all those commandments...

MARK

And here I thought God was just being a party pooper.

SADIE

Concerned

But, but...can anyone really keep all those commandments?

SID

Agreeing with Sadie

There *are* a lot of them!

GRANNY IRIS

Well, the Israelites sure tried! The commandments were part of a new covenant that God made with them. But unlike the covenants He made with Noah or Abraham, God asked for Israel to keep up their end of the bargain by living by the Laws he gave them.

And things went okay for a while. The Israelites conquered the land of Canaan. Only they didn't drive out the people who lived there. They started living like those people and started worshiping their gods.

Within a few generations, Israel had completely spiraled down into corruption and anarchy. The book of Judges says over and over again: "In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

FRANK

And *that* is how you get a sunburn.

SONG: THESE DAYS WITHOUT A KING