

**Ex. 32:1** And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Now we flash back to what is happening in the camp while Moses is up on the mountain with God. Moses has been gone for a good while. After all that these people have seen God do on their behalf, they decide that they need other gods. So they go to Aaron and asked him to make them gods to go before them since they don't know what has happened to Moses. They still can't see past the man that led them out of Egypt to the God that made that deliverance possible. I guess they figured if Moses was gone, God must have gone with him. Moses wasn't gone more than 40 days and nights, so it was little more than a month since he went up the mountain.

**Ex. 32:2** And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me.

**Ex. 32:3** And all the people brake off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* unto Aaron.

**Ex. 32:4** And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Amazingly, Aaron agrees. He tells them to give him the gold earrings from the ears of their wives, sons and daughters. (Men's jewelry is nothing new under the sun.) They did. After taking their jewelry, Aaron used a graving tool (chisel) and made a "molten" calf. The word for "molten" means "a pouring over." It sounds like he chiseled the form of a calf from something else (probably wood) and then poured melted gold over it. Then he gives them to the people of Israel as their gods that "brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." (He just made one calf.....?)

I just don't get it. This man is God's hand-picked second in command so to speak. He had been allowed to "see" the God of Israel (24:10). He knows full well who the real Deliverer is. How could he have such a weak spine? (But for the grace of God.....)

Aaron is a prime example of those who pastor seeker driven churches today. As is so often the case in corrupt ministry, they declare their motives to be in honor of the LORD just as Aaron did in verse 5.

**Ex. 32:5** And when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow *is* a feast to the LORD.

**Ex. 32:6** And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

After observing his handiwork, Aaron built an altar to place in front of the golden calf. Then he announced to the people that the next day would be a feast (festival, sacrifice) "to the LORD." The word *LORD* in Hebrew is the special name for God used by Israel. (Did he actually think he could make it right, by saying that it represented God?) The people got up early the next morning and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings at the altar. Then they sat down to eat and drink, and then got up to "play." The Hebrew word for *play* indicates to laugh outright in merriment or scorn—to laugh, mock, play or make sport. Were they making fun of God Almighty?

**Ex. 32:7** And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*:

**Ex. 32:8** They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These *be thy gods, O Israel*, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

The LORD lets Moses in on what is happening in the camp. He tells him to go back down. All of a sudden, the people belong to Moses who was credited with bringing them out of the land of Egypt. God doesn't claim them. (I think most parents can identify with that attitude. There have been many times I've said, "Jim, do you know what your child did?") He informs Moses that the people have corrupted themselves and have turned away from God's commands. He tells Moses that they have made a molten calf and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it. They have credited it as the gods that brought them out of Egypt.

Nothing we do is hidden from the Lord.

**Psa. 139:1-4** ¶ O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways. For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

**Ex. 32:9** And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

**Ex. 32:10** Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

The LORD is very angry. He has seen (watched, stared at) these people and sees them as a stiffnecked people--churlish, unmanageable, cruel, hardhearted, obstinate, stubborn. He wants Moses to leave Him so that He can respond in His wrath against them and destroy them. Then He will make a great nation of Moses.

**Ex. 32:11** And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

**Ex. 32:12** Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

**Ex. 32:13** Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit *it* for ever.

**Ex. 32:14** And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. Amazingly, Moses questions God's anger. A key phrase is that Moses recognized the LORD as "his God." He reminds the LORD that the people belong to Him, not to Moses. He brings up the fact that the Egyptians wouldn't understand a God who would rescue His people only to destroy them from off the face of the earth. He is expressing concern for protecting God's name and reputation. He asks God to repent (take a deep breath, and be sorry about His decision as He looks on His people with

pity). Moses reminds the LORD of His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Israel (Jacob). They were His servants to whom He promised to make their seed as the stars of heaven and give them the promised land for an eternal inheritance.

We know, of course, that God doesn't need to be reminded of the facts. I think He is letting us know through His inspired word that He is a faithful God of love and mercy. His anger was righteous and justified, but He is always faithful to His word. In spite of the terrible sin of the people, He spared them. (3/10 – This also reminds me of James 5:16, “...*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*”

**Ex. 32:15 And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.**

**Ex. 32:16 And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.**

Moses now heads down the mountain. He is carrying the two tables of testimony in his hand. They contain writing on all four sides of the tables. Again we are told that these tables were made by God Himself and written in His own hand.

**Ex. 32:17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, *There is a noise of war in the camp.***

**Ex. 32:18 And he said, *It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.***

As Moses is coming back down the mountain, he gets back to the point where Joshua had been waiting for him (cf 24:13). Joshua tells him that he has heard the noise of shouting and war (fighting) in the camp. Moses says that it doesn't sound like the shouts of victors or of those who have been conquered; it sounds like singing. When I checked Strong's for the Hebrew for the word *sing*, it wasn't at all what I expected.

**6031.** a primitive root (possibly rather ident. with 6030 through the idea of looking down or **browbeating**)...**abase self**, afflict(-ion, self), ... defile... hurt, ravish, sing (by mistake for 6030)...weaken....

In reading this through again, I think I've made the right connection. Moses knew the noise was indicative of the defiling behavior of the people. They didn't even realize how they were hurting themselves and weakening their relationship with God.

**Ex. 32:19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.**

**Ex. 32:20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.**

When Moses got near the camp, he saw the calf and the dancing. He got very angry and threw the tables out of his hands, and broke them on the mountain. Then he took the calf that they had made and burned it in the fire. (3/10) As with all false gods, it was powerless to protect itself, let alone the people.

Moses then ground the ashes and melted gold into powder and spread it out over the drinking water and made the people drink it. Sin should be bitter to the taste.

**Ex. 32:21** And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

**Ex. 32:22** And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they *are set* on mischief.

**Ex. 32:23** For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

**Ex. 32:24** And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break *it off*. So they gave *it* me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

Now Moses turns his attention to Aaron. He asks him what the people could have possibly done to him to cause him to act so as to bring great sin upon the people. Aaron immediately begins blame-shifting. He told Moses that he should not be angry at him. He reminds Moses that he knows the people and their evil nature. They came to Aaron asking him to make them gods since Moses had disappeared. So he told them to give him their gold. They did and he took it and threw it into the fire—and out came the calf. (No mention of a chisel here or his part in shaping the calf. It just appeared out of the fire.)

In Deuteronomy Moses emphasizes that God was very angry with Aaron as well as the people. He was held accountable for the sin of the people.

**Deut. 9:20** And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time.

**Deut. 9:21** And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, *and* ground *it* very small, *even* until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.

**Ex. 32:25** And when Moses saw that the people *were* naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto *their* shame among their enemies:)

Moses took notice of the fact that the people weren't properly dressed; I don't think the word implies completely naked. The phrase in parenthesis does, however, indicate that they would be considered a shameful people by their enemies.

**Ex. 32:26** Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who *is* on the LORD'S side? *let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

Moses stood at the entrance to the camp and asked a question that demanded an immediate response—"Who is on the LORD'S side? Those who were choosing God as LORD were to come to him. All the sons of Levi presented themselves before Moses to indicate their desire to follow God.

**Ex. 32:27** And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, *and* go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

**Ex. 32:28** And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

Moses spoke to the Levites and gave them instructions from the LORD God of Israel. (We aren't told how God gave Moses this word.)

The Levites are told to take his sword at his side (by his thigh) and go in and out the different entrance points to the camp and kill his brother, companion and neighbor. (I'm not sure how they knew who to kill and who not to kill. They didn't kill everyone. They killed about 3,000 men. It would seem that God supernaturally prevented any opposition.)

**Ex. 32:29** For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

The Levites had obeyed to the point of killing sons and brothers. That type of obedience had set them apart for the LORD and placed them in a position of blessing. This brings to mind something Jesus said:

**Matt. 10:37** He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

That is a very hard truth to absorb. It's hard for a mom to think she could love anyone like she loves her family. It becomes easier when we realize that we can love our family best by loving God the most and entrusting our family to Him and interceding for them in prayer.

**Ex. 32:30** And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

On the next day Moses spoke to people and told them that their sin was great. He was now going to go up to the LORD to see if he could make atonement for their sin (to seek forgiveness for them).

**Ex. 32:31** And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

**Ex. 32:32** Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

God hasn't moved. He is still at the top of the mountain. (It's never God that moves away from us; we are always the ones that move away from Him.)

Moses returns to Him and acknowledges the great sin of the people and that they had made gods of gold. Then he asks for forgiveness for their sin. Moses is very secure in his relationship with the LORD. He implores God to blot him out of His book if He is not willing to forgive the people. I don't think Moses would have said this if He did not have faith that God would forgive the people. The LORD had already shown His love and mercy by not destroying the people in the first place. That decision was based on the honor of His name and His faithfulness to His promise to His servants of old.

The other interesting thing to note is the fact that Moses knew that God had a book that recorded the names of those who followed Him in faith. (See topical study on "The Book of Life.")

**Ex. 32:33** And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

**Ex. 32:34** Therefore now go, lead the people unto *the place* of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

**Ex. 32:35** And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

The LORD doesn't give Moses a direct answer to His question. He informs Moses that the individual who sins against Him will be blotted out of His book. (That obviously can't mean any sin or there would be no one in the book, so it must mean one who sins without repentance.) In context, He is referencing those who worshipped the golden calf.

Then we learn that the people were not delivered from the consequences of their sin; sin always has consequences. These consequences were determined by God. He decreed that they suffer plague (probably disease). This punishment was a direct response to their choosing to make the calf their god. Emphasis is given that Aaron made the calf. (It didn't just appear out of the fire.)

Then Moses is told to go and lead the people to the place that He has already spoken to Moses about. The LORD will send His Angel before them. The fact that the word angel is capitalized in the KJV indicates that the translators considered this to be a preincarnate Jesus, and Paul affirms this in his letter to the Corinthians.

*1 Corinthians 10:1-4 "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."*