

From the Holy Fire to a Holy Cow

Exodus Chapter 32

Exd 32:1 **1) Idolatry** v. 1 - 10

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Did Moses
Abandon the
People?

What do you do
when a Leader
seemingly does
you wrong?

Leave Him,
Leave God
Remain Faithful

- Since chapter 24, Moses has been on the mountain with God. He has been on the mountain for 40 days.
 - Noah - Rained for 40 days and 40 nights (Gen 7:12)
 - Jacob/Israel took 40 days to embalm (Gen 50:3)
 - Moses on the mountain 1st time 40 days (Exo 24:18)
 - Moses on the mountain 2nd time 40 days (Exo 34:28)
 - Spies on the land for 40 days (Num 13:25)
 - Punishment for bad report from most of the spies- wandering 40 years (Num 14:34)
 - Gideon judged for 40 years (Judges 8:28)
 - Goliath taunted Saul's army for 40 days (1 Sam 17:16)
 - David reigned for 40 years (1 Kings 2:11)
 - Ezekiel laid on his side for 40 days pertaining to the iniquity of Judah (Eze 4:6)
 - Jonah's message was "40 days on Nineveh will be overthrown" (Jon 3:4)
 - Jesus fasted 40 days (Matt 4:2)
 - Jesus was in wilderness tempted 40 days (Mark 1:13)
 - Jesus appeared to disciples after the resurrection for 40 days (Acts 1:3)
- Now that we are not on the heavenly plain with God, but are on the earthly plain with man, we see right away two major mistakes are made by the Children of Israel.
 - Moses Delayed - No, he was with God. God controlled the timing
 - Without daily communion with God they get impatient.
 - Leaning out their own judgment as for timing of things.
 - Moses Brought Them Out of Egypt - No, God Did.
 - Without daily communion with God they lose true perspective.
 - Re-writing history to remove accountability
- Impatience in us will reveal our unbelief and our level of trust.
- The people came to Aaron and asked for another God. **Exodus 20:3** "You shall have no other gods before Me"
- This is a warning to us concerning being led in ministry by what people express as a need. This can be dangerous and the wrong direction. The priest or leaders should be led/directed by the Spirit of God.
- It is interesting that in Moses time the people went from trusting God, a great deliverer, to trusting in what their own hands can make. Paul dealt with the same thing. **Galatians 3:3** "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?" And you and I have the same tendency to trust Him and then return a place where we make out decisions without consulting God.

Exd 32:2 Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring {them} to me."

Exd 32:3 Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought {them} to Aaron.

- Exodus 25:1-7 Moses received instruction to take up a collection for the materials to make the tabernacle and its furnishings. Here Aaron is requesting the same.
- Aaron wanted the precious things from the people to make their God
- This demonstrates how committed they were to have an idol.
- Matthew 6:21 "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Exd 32:4 He took {this} from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."

- Aaron fashions the idol. **Exodus 20:4** "You shall not make for yourself an idol"
- True leadership would have said "NO! This is wrong."
- The people declared this calf was a god and who brought them up from Egypt."



Exd 32:5 Now when Aaron saw {this,} he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow {shall be} a feast to the LORD."

- When Aaron saw this: saw what? When he saw the people accepted his work and were pleased by it he did more of the same. Then the goal of Aaron's ministry was to please the people, not to build people up in their faith and communion with God.
- This type of ministry leads to more error and more sin
- Aaron builds an altar before the calf. To lay offerings or possibly sacrifices.
- Aaron takes the Lord's name in vain. **Exodus 20:7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain"**
- LORD = the proper name of God JEHOVAH
- Aaron could be stating that JEHOVAH shall be worshiped through this calf rather than replaced by the calf.

Exd 32:6 So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

- The people rose up early to worship their new god.
- They brought sacrifices and they partied around the calf.
- The words "rose up to play" have a connotation of sexual immorality.
 - Deut 22:21 "Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you."
 - 1 Cor 10 6-8 "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as [were] some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand."
- Israel has a gluttonous, drunken orgy. **Exodus 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery."**
- Just 2 months before all Israel heard the commandments of God. Now we see them fashioning a god for themselves with less restrictions.

Exd 32:7 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted {themselves.}

Is this
sarcasm
from God?
(verse 1 & 8)

- God tells Moses to GO DOWN. But God calls the people YOUR people and whom YOU brought up. In s sense God is implying He disowns them.
- They have corrupted themselves. Corrupted doesn't mean a little rust or a small transgression. The Hebrew (*shachath*) means to ruin, rotted, spoiled or to **destroy**. (see verse 10)

Exd 32:8 "They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!' "

- God is aware of all the details of what Israel has done. God even repeats their exact words.

Exd 32:9 The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.
Exd 32:10 "Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may **destroy** them; and I will make of you a great nation."

- God is announcing an incredible possibility for Moses. Starting over with Him.
- Moses would be the new Abraham.
- God could have done this. For Moses was in the line of Abraham and God would have been keeping His promise He had made with Abraham
- Notice the word "destroy". This Hebrew word is *kalah*. It means to consume or eliminate or to be finished with.
- They are eliminated only after Israel had destroyed themselves. (corrupted verse 7)

Exd 32:11 **2) Intercession** v. 11 - 14

Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?"

- Moses intercedes for the people.
- Moses acknowledges that the people are the Lords and that it was He who brought them out of Egypt.
- Moses appeals to God because of GRACE - He brought them out by His hand and power

Exd 32:12 "Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil {intent} He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about {doing} harm to Your people.

- Moses appeals to God because of His GLORY - His name will be discredited

Exd 32:13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit {it} forever.' "

- Moses appeals to God because of His GOODNESS - God had sworn to Abraham, Isaac and Israel that they would be a great people.
- Moses intercedes not based on what the people would get but on the character of God.

Exd 32:14 So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

- Changed His Mind (KJV = Repented of the evil)
- Numbers 23:19 "God [is] not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do [it]? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"
- 1 Samuel 15:29 "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He [is] not a man, that he should repent."
- Jeremiah 18:6-10 "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay [is] in the potter's hand, so [are] ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. [At what] instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy [it]; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And [at what] instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant [it]; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them."
- Does God Repent?
 - The New Testament calls man to REPENT from their evil wicked ways.
 - There is no wickedness in God. He cannot repent in the manner man is called to repent.
 - To describe God man only has human language, and human understanding.
 - Moses and the prophets use "*anthropomorphic*" language to describe God's action.
 - If the earth opened up and swallowed hundreds of rebellious people that would be bad for them. It could be said evil was done to them. But in actuality it wasn't evil but a fulfillment of a promise and that is a good thing. God keeps His Word.
 - God is never changing and is the same yesterday today and forever. God has promised to punish wickedness and bless righteousness. So when God keeps His word He isn't repenting but He is unchanging - Keeping what he said he would do.

- Ezekiel 33:13-20 "When I shall say to the righteous, [that] he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; [If] the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.
Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways."

Exd 32:15 **3) Moses Enters the Camp** v. 15 - 20

Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one {side} and the other.

Exd 32:16 The tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets.

- Moses heads back down the mountain to the camp
- He has the tablets of the testimony.
- "THEY WERE GOD'S WORK...GOD'S WRITING" These were and are God's standard and God's morality. They are not man's idea.

Exd 32:17 Now when Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a sound of war in the camp."

- Joshua, although he is corrected by Moses may have a sense of the spiritual war that is occurring.

Exd 32:18 But he said, "It is not the sound of the cry of triumph, Nor is it the sound of the cry of defeat; But the sound of singing I hear."

Exd 32:19 It came about, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and {the} dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.

- Moses before God had the heart for God. He interceded for this people. Moses comes to the camp and sees the wickedness and is angered.
- It seems appropriate that Moses throws down the tablets and shatters the commandments for Israel had broken the commandments of God.

Exd 32:20 He took the calf which they had made and burned {it} with fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it over the surface of the water and made the sons of Israel drink {it.}

- Moses demonstrates to Israel that this calf was no god.

- He burns it	- If you can burn your god	...he is no god.
- He grinds it up	- If you can grind up your god	...he is no god.
- He mixes it with water	- If you can mix your god with water	...he is no god.
- He makes them drink it	- If you can drink your god	...he is no god.

(Focht)

Exd 32:21 **4) Moses Confronts Aaron** v. 21 - 24

Then Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought {such} great sin upon them?"

- Moses realizes that this sin didn't originate with Aaron but he was responsible for it's fulfillment.
- Many ways we are not the originators of the sin / temptation that is in our life. But we are responsible for it's fulfillment. We can and must stop sin.

Exd 32:22 Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil.

Exd 32:23 "For they said to me, 'Make a god for us who will go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'

Exd 32:24 "I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.' So they gave {it} to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."

- Aaron doesn't have the sense that he was the one to stand at the doorway and prevent Israel's sin.
- He tries to shift responsibility on them. "They are prone to evil" (when Adam was confronted he tried to shift responsibility "that woman you gave me")
- He tries to shift it again on to Moses "we didn't know what had become of him" He was saying "Moses you took too long."
- He tried to ancient excuse "*it just happened*" (HE LIED) He carved and engraved it (see verse 4)
- If you think Aaron is getting by or away with this he isn't. It is only by intercession that he is spared.
Deuteronomy 9:20 "And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time."

Exd 32:25 **5) Moses Confronts the People** v. 25 - 29

Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control--for Aaron had let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies--

- The people were "out of control" -- and Aaron let it happen. This is a demonstration of poor leadership. Yes the people desired sin. But the leader let it happen.
- In our case sin in the people around us might be obvious and it might be the subtle inner heart. Good leadership confronts sin in all it's form and does not let it happen but does all it can to prevent it.
- Christians "out of control" will cause us to whispered about by our enemies.
- (derision = shame or to whisper)

Exd 32:26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, {come} to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him.

- Moses is granting the opportunity for Israel to forsake the false god and stand with the Lord God Almighty.
- The tribe of Levi was the only tribe that returned to the Lord in full. No doubt the other tribes had numbers of their families to return but it was only Levi who stood with the Lord in total.
- This is a picture of REPENTANCE that man is called to.
- The choice is given but it is the man who must decide make the move. It doesn't happen to him.
- Repentance is a choice for the Lord or against Him.

Exd 32:27 He said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Every man {of you} put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.' "

- Some might ask "are they breaking the 6th commandment?" The answer is NO. The commandment uses the Hebrew word "*ratsach*" which means murder. Here the Hebrew word is "*harug*" which means to kill.
- Some might say "What is the difference? The result is the same?" The answer is that:
 - Murder is the taking of a life without a moral justification.
 - Killing is the taking of a life with a moral justification.
 - How do you determine when taking a life has a moral justification? You don't, God Does.
- Another part of the picture of repentance is that without repentance destruction is inevitable.
- 2 Corinthians 7:10 "*For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.*"

Exd 32:28 So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.

- 3000 were killed that day.
- There were 2 million in Israel. The 3000 must have been the instigators and/or the most zealous unrepentant.

Exd 32:29 Then Moses said, "Dedicate yourselves today to the LORD--for every man has been against his son and against his brother--in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today."

- Another part of the picture of repentance is that there is blessing for a repentant soul.
- Again 2 Corinthians 7:10 "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death."

Exd 32:30 **6) Moses Intercedes Again** v. 30- 35

On the next day Moses said to the people, "You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the LORD, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

Exd 32:31 Then Moses returned to the LORD, and said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves.

Exd 32:32 "But now, if You will, forgive their sin--and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!"

- Moses had already interceded for the people. But now he has seen the GREAT SIN they have committed.
- He knows now the distance between a wicked people and a holy God. This demonstrates the humanness of Moses. He is appalled and realizes that the death penalty is justified.
- Moses asks for forgiveness.
- "if not, please blot me out" - Moses identifies with a sacrificial identification of the sinful people.
- Paul did the same in Romans 9:3 "*For I could wish that I myself were accursed, {separated} from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,*"
- Jesus did the same in 1 Peter 3:18 "*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*"
- And 2 Corinthians 5:21 "*For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*"
- It is interesting that Moses refers to a book whose names are written in. Revelation 3:5 "*He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*"
- It is interesting that everyone's name is originally in the book and the names of the unrepentant are blotted out.

Exd 32:33 The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

Exd 32:34 "But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin."

- God grants the grace for the nation but reserves the right to punish individual sinners.
- God will send an angel that will guide them.
- But he will punish on a particular day.

Exd 32:35 Then the LORD smote the people, because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made.

- Moses appealed to God for forgiveness. With the law sin was covered but it did not remove the sin. The Law of Moses could never remove the penalty. The penalty will be paid. Only the sacrifice of Jesus. Gods only son can remove the sin once and for all.
- Hebrews 10:10-12 "*we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time*"

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