

# Exodus 32 Commentary

[PREVIOUS](#)

[NEXT](#)

**CLICK VERSE**

To go directly to that verse

[Exodus 32:1](#)

[Exodus 32:2](#)

[Exodus 32:3](#)

[Exodus 32:4](#)

[Exodus 32:5](#)

[Exodus 32:6](#)

[Exodus 32:7](#)

[Exodus 32:8](#)

[Exodus 32:9](#)

[Exodus 32:10](#)

[Exodus 32:11](#)

[Exodus 32:12](#)

[Exodus 32:13](#)

[Exodus 32:14](#)

[Exodus 32:15](#)

[Exodus 32:16](#)

[Exodus 32:17](#)

[Exodus 32:18](#)

[Exodus 32:19](#)

[Exodus 32:20](#)

[Exodus 32:21](#)

[Exodus 32:22](#)

[Exodus 32:23](#)

[Exodus 32:24](#)

[Exodus 32:25](#)

[Exodus 32:26](#)

[Exodus 32:27](#)

[Exodus 32:28](#)

[Exodus 32:29](#)

[Exodus 32:30](#)

[Exodus 32:31](#)

[Exodus 32:32](#)

[Exodus 32:33](#)

[Exodus 32:34](#)

[Exodus 32:35](#)

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[View Chuck Swindoll's chart of Exodus.](#)

Summary Chart of The Book of Exodus	
<b>DELIVERANCE FROM OPPRESSION</b>	<b>PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP</b>
Redemption from Egypt Ex 1:1-18:27	Revelation from God Ex 19:1-40:38
Getting Israel Out of Egypt	Getting Egypt Out of Israel!

Narration						Legislation			
Birth of Moses Ex 1-2	Call of Moses Ex 3-6	Conflict with Pharaoh Ex 7-10	Exodus from Egypt Ex 11-12	Red Sea Crossed Ex 13-15	Journey To Sinai Ex 16-18	Law Given Ex 19-24	Tent Plan Ex 25-31	Idol Worship Ex 32-34	Tent Built Ex 35-40
Subjection			Redemption			Instruction			
Suffering and Liberation of People of God			Guidance of God			Worship of God			
Moses and Burdens of Israel		Pharaoh and Plagues Upon Egypt		Red Sea Deliverance	Wilderness Provision	Sinai Instructions			
Bondage and Oppression			Deliverance and Provision			Law Pattern and Construction			
Israel in Egypt Ex 1:1-13:16			Israel to Sinai Ex 13:17-18:27			Israel at Sinai Ex 19:1-40:38			
God's People Enduring Bondage			God's Grace Revealed in Redemption			God's Glory Manifested in Worship			
Egypt 430 Years (15% of Exodus)			Wilderness 2 Months (30% of Exodus)			Mt Sinai 10 Months (55% of Exodus)			
From Groaning									To Glory!

[Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament](#) - online

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[Click for Events during the Sojourn at Kadesh-Barnea](#)

GENESIS	EXODUS
human effort and failure	divine power and triumph
word of promise	work of fulfillment
a people chosen	a people called
God's electing mercy	God's electing manner
revelation of nationality	realization of nationality

SUMMARY OF THE PENTATEUCH  
(from Believer's Study Bible)

**Exodus 32:1** 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."

NET Exodus 32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, "Get up, make us gods that will go before us. As for this fellow Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him!"

NLT Exodus 32:1 When the people saw how long it was taking Moses to come back down the mountain, they

gathered around Aaron. "Come on," they said, "make us some gods who can lead us. We don't know what happened to this fellow Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt."

ESV Exodus 32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

NIV Exodus 32:1 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people combined against Aaron, and said to him, Arise and make us gods who shall go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us forth out of the land of Egypt-- we do not know what is become of him.

ASV Exodus 32:1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from 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 know not what is become of him.

CSB Exodus 32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt-- we don't know what has happened to him!"

NKJ Exodus 32:1 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

NRS Exodus 32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

YLT Exodus 32:1 And the people see that Moses is delaying to come down from the mount, and the people assemble against Aaron, and say unto him, 'Rise, make for us gods who go before us, for this Moses -- the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt -- we have not known what hath happened to him.'

- **delayed:** Ex 24:18 De 9:9 Mt 24:43 2Pe 3:4
- **come:** Ge 19:14 44:4 Jos 7:13
- **make:** Ex 20:3-5 De 4:15-18 Ac 7:40 17:29 19:26
- **will:** Ex 13:21 33:3,14,15
- **the man:** Ex 32:7,11 14:11 16:3 Ho 12:13 Mic 6:4
- **we do not know:** Ge 21:26 39:8 Ge 44:15 Mt 24:48 2Pe 3:4
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MOSES' DELAY LEADS TO ISRAEL'S DISASTROUS DEVIATION**

**NET Note introduction** - This narrative is an unhappy interlude in the flow of the argument of the book. After the giving of the Law and the instructions for the tabernacle, the people get into idolatry. So this section tells what the people were doing when Moses was on the mountain. Here is an instant violation of the covenant that they had just agreed to uphold. But through it all Moses shines as the great intercessor for the people. So the subject matter is the sin of idolatry, its effects and its remedy.

This chapter can be divided into four parts for an easier exposition:

1. idolatry (32:1–6), Impatience often leads to foolish violations of the faith
2. intercession (32:7–14), Violations of the covenant require intercession to escape condemnation,
3. judgment (32:15–29), Those spared of divine wrath must purge evil from their midst,
4. intercession again (32:30–33:6). Those who purge evil from their midst will find reinstatement through intercession.

This tragic chapter is recalled by the psalmist Psalm 106:19-23

19 They made a calf in Horeb  
And worshiped a molten image.  
20 Thus they exchanged their glory  
For the image of an ox that eats grass.  
21 They forgot God their Savior,  
Who had done great things in Egypt,  
22 Wonders in the land of Ham  
And awesome things by the Red Sea.  
23 Therefore He said that He would destroy them,  
Had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him,  
To turn away His wrath from destroying them.

Note the Book Summary Chart above **Getting Israel Out of Egypt** (Exodus 1-18) and then **Getting Egypt Out of Israel** (Exodus 19-40). Israel had lived in a culture permeated with pagan idolatry. So even though they had seen terrifying manifestations of the true and living God and heard His voice regarding His command to have no other God and to make no images of a god, they quickly reverted to their memories of idolatry in Egypt.

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, one lesson we all must take to heart from Exodus 32 is that the evil practices of our life before Christ are still in our memory banks and our fallen flesh is very crafty at bringing those things to mind when we are vulnerable and our guard is down and thus to tempt us to take a trip down memory lane back into the darkness. And so we see the relevance of Jesus' warning command to "**Keep watching** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) and **praying** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mt 26:41+)

**Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain-** We learn from Ex 24:18+ that "Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights." Apparently neither Aaron, nor even Moses for that matter, had had any idea how long his meeting with Jehovah would last. **Moses delayed** is a bit misleading because Moses did not voluntarily decide to delay, but the sovereign God of the universe ordained for him to stay 40 days and nights. The people perceived Moses' "**delayed**" which led to Israel's deviation, delusion and deception! Also notable is the Hebrew verb ([bosh](#)) primarily means caused shame and in this context means caused disappointment because he had not yet returned.

**Delayed** (put to shame) ([0954](#)) see [bosh](#)

**George Bush on delayed - When the people saw that Moses delayed,** &c. Heb. *כי בושש משה* *ki boshesh Mosheh*, lit. that Moses caused shame. The idiom of the original in regard to this word is peculiar. The radical *בוש* *bosh* signifies primarily to be ashamed, abashed, to blush for shame, whether through fear, modesty, or disappointment; and as long tarrying or waiting in vain for one's coming is apt to be attended with a sensation of shame or displacency, as Jdg. 3:25, 'they tarried till they were ashamed (embarrassed, anxious);' the word is thence easily applied as here to tarrying or delaying, the effect being put, by a usual rhetorical figure, for the cause. See this ideal connexion between delay and shame in the diction of the Hebrew more fully unfolded in the Note on Jdg. 3:25. The Gr. has *κεχρονικε* from *χρονιζω* (*chronizo*), to procrastinate, a derivative from *χρονος* (*chronos*), usually rendered time, but in many cases more legitimately signifying delay. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**THOUGHT** - How we handle God's ordained delays is a good measure of our spiritual maturity. If we allow such delays to make us drift off into sin or lapse into resignation to fate, then we react poorly to His ordained delays. If we allow such times to deepen our perseverance in following God, then they are of good use.

**The people assembled about Aaron - Victor Hamilton** paraphrases this "*the people ganged up on Aaron.*" (see Stuart's note below). There is nothing like a crowd to influence a weak leader and Aaron proved to be very weak which set him up to be a "crowd pleaser" and an idol maker. In America a popular show is "American Idol," but Aaron falls for a popular show in Egypt called "Egyptian Idolatrous Calf!"

Recall from Ex 24:14+ that **Aaron and Hur** had been left in charge and yet for reasons that are not clear, we see no mention of Hur. Neither do we see any criticism of Hur once the plot is discovered by Moses. This is one of those mysteries we will have to wait until Heaven to learn the answer.

**Stuart on assembled about** - The Hebrew expression employed, *qāhal niphāl + 'al*, is used by Moses only three other times, all in

Numbers and all in contexts of opposition and hostility (Nu 16:3 = "they **assembled together against** Moses." cf Nu 16:41 = "the congregation **had assembled against** Moses and Aaron"), where the proper translation is "gather against" or the like....This does not excuse Aaron, who should have been willing to resist such pressure but who instead caved in to it. Yet it does tell us that Aaron may have acted partly out of fear for his own popularity/wellbeing/acceptance or the like.

**Bush - Gathered themselves together unto Aaron.** Heb. יקהל על ארון yikkahël al Aaron, were assembled upon or against, Aaron. The usual term in Hebrew for to is אל el instead of על al, which latter has more the sense of contra, against, and the idea intended to be conveyed is probably that they beset him in a violent and tumultuous manner, clamorously demanding of him that he should yield to their wishes. It is perhaps but justice to Aaron to suppose that he at first earnestly opposed the measure, but that he was at length overcome by the importunity and menaces of the people. Still nothing can excuse his ultimate compliance. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**And said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us-** The initial impulse to make an idol came not from Aaron but from the people. The crowd issues two staccato commands (almost like an ultimatum) **come** (arise, stand up; [Lxx](#) = [anistemi](#) which is a Hebrew idiom marking the beginning of an action as in Mt 9:9) "Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil." (Pr 12:20) "Will they not go astray who devise evil?" (Pr 14:22) **God** ([Elohim](#)) is literally "gods" plural. Israel is about 3 months out of Egypt but seems to have quickly forgotten that Jehovah had gone "before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night" (Ex 13:21+, Ex 14:19+) Not only did they forget that Jehovah had gone before them but they forgot He had even stood behind them to protect them from the Egyptians who would otherwise have slaughtered them (Ex 14:19, 20+). Think about this scene -- they were at the foot of Mt Sinai and doubtless the Shekinah glory was still manifest and yet they are now wanting something else to **go before** them!

**James Davies** - They had become accustomed while in Egypt to seeing visible representations of deity, and we learn, from Joshua, that they had themselves habitually worshipped these. (Notes on Exodus) COMMENT - Here is a relevant quote from Joshua 24:14-16 (context - Joshua is about to pass on, and so these are some of his last words of warning)...

Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and **put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt**, and serve the LORD. (CLEARLY ISRAEL HAD PERSISTED IN EGYPTIAN IDOLATRY) 15 "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether **the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living**; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." 16 The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods.

**Alan Cole** - Impatience lay at the root of this sin of Israel's. They cannot wait. Where has Moses gone? They must have visible gods....they want a god 'with a face', like everybody else. The last thing that they want is to be different, by their new relationship to God: yet this is God's aim (Ex 19:5, 6). ([TOTC-Exodus](#))

**Douglas Stuart** asks "But why did the people want "gods who can go before us"? Were they not satisfied with Yahweh's leadership during the past months, as He went before them day and night? The answer was (1) partly a matter of the strong attractions of idolatry, (2) partly a matter of the absence of Moses, who was so closely associated with Yahweh's presence, (3) partly a matter of the passage of time during which the obvious presence of Yahweh in the pillar of cloud and fire was lacking, (4) partly a matter of the attractiveness of the idea of a [syncretism](#) of Yahwism with the [Egyptian bull cult](#), but mostly a matter of something that continues to plague even Christian people today -- **an inability to see that the spiritual world is primary to and in control of the physical and visible world**. In order to help His people understand the truth, Yahweh insisted on being believed in rather than being seen (cf 2 Cor 4:18, 2 Cor 5:7). It was so much easier to believe in something that could actually be seen. The Israelites were powerfully attracted to the latter option. ([New American Commentary - Exodus](#))

**NET Note** on "**come**" - The imperative means "**arise**." It could be serving here as an interjection, getting Aaron's attention. But it might also have the force of prompting him to get busy.

**Bosh - Up, make us gods, &c.** Heb. עשה לנו אלחים asêh lanu elohim, make for us Elohim....We are not to suppose that a people who only six weeks before had witnessed such amazing demonstrations of the existence and glory of the true God had suddenly sunk to such a pitch of mad infatuation and brutish stupidity, as to imagine that human fabrication could 'make a god that should go before them.' Their meaning was that an image, a visible sign or symbol of Jehovah, should be made, something which should answer to them in place of the Shekinah which had hitherto conducted them in the pillar of cloud. This visible symbol, which they had hitherto enjoyed, and which had now become apparently immovable on the summit of the mount, is frequently denominated 'glory,' or 'glory of the Lord,' and as they proposed to form to themselves so vile a substitute for this as a brute animal, therefore it is that the Psalmist calls it a 'changing of their glory into the likeness of an ox that eateth grass.' (Ps 106:20) That the measure was prompted at bottom by a distaste of a purely spiritual worship, and a desire to be furnished with some sensible sign of a divine

presence in the midst of them, is, we think, quite manifest; and that the forms of Egyptian idolatry, to which they had been previously familiarised, had tended to infuse this leaven into their minds, is, in our view, equally unquestionable. We are inclined, therefore, to give no little weight to the following extracts from the Rabbinical writers cited by Bishop Patrick. In the Puke Eheser (c. 55.) we are told that *'they said unto Aaron, The Egyptians extol their gods; they sing and chant before them; for they behold them with their eyes. Make us such gods as theirs are, that we may see them before us.'* So also R. Jehudah (Cosri, P. 1. § 97.) 'They desired a sensible object of divine worship to be set before them; not with an intention to deny God, who brought them out of Egypt, but that something in the place of God might stand before them, when they declared his wonderful works.

Forty years later Moses warns Israel again, which in fact is a warning we ALL need and need frequently (if not even daily!)...

Deuteronomy 4:15-18 "So **watch** yourselves (NOTE "**YOURSELVES**"! OUR FALLEN FLESH IS THE MAIN PROBLEM WHICH SEEKS TO MAKE IDOLS TO ITS OWN SUITING) carefully, since (NOW MOSES EXPLAINS WHY WATCH) you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, 16 so that (PURPOSE OF WATCHING SELF) you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves (THERE IS THAT "SELF" FOCUSED WORD AGAIN! IDOLS PANDER TO SELF!) in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, 17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky, 18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth.

**As for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him-** Notice the phrase **this Moses** ("this fellow Moses" - NET, NIV, NLT) which is somewhat derogatory and sets the tone for their rebellious request. Note their phrase **the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt** reflects Moses as their leader, but disregards that it was Jehovah Who brought them up from Egypt, a fact about God which they have forgotten and which sets them up to fall for a false god (cf Acts 7:40+).

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

--- A W Tozer

**Alan Cole** - The phrasing is deliberately employed to bring out the coarseness of this slave people. They do not regard the redemption really as YHWH's achievement at all: it was simply something that Moses had done. ([TOTC-Exodus](#))

**Hamilton on this Moses** - A parallel may be in Ezek. 5:5 if one reads, "This Jerusalem [zō't yērūšālayim] I have set in the center of the nations" rather than supply "is" and "which," as does NIV: "This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations." In both Exod. 32:1 and Ezek. 5:5 the people/God are expressing disgust with and distancing themselves from Moses/Jerusalem, the sources of their disgust. For this negative, disparaging use of the demonstrative, see Joosten (1991). ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**We do not know what has become of him** - It is as if their ignorance of Moses' time of return from the presence of God gives them "carte blanche" to jump into the "god" making business. It is saying "since we don't know, we've got a good alternative plan." Proverbs 6:18 says "A heart (metonymy for the "will") that devises wicked plans (cf Ge 6:5), Feet that run rapidly to evil,

**Bush** says " how little respect do they show to his memory! How lightly do they speak of the apparent loss of their faithful leader, of their kind benefactor! 'We wot not what is become of him!'—evidently implying that they cared as little as they pretended to know. Alas! how true is it, as evinced by this transaction, that the highest services, the greatest merits, the richest benefactions, cannot secure their subjects from the vilest indignities, aspersions, and ingratitude of their objects!" ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Hamilton** makes an interesting point - nobody suffers any consequences for these "sins" (grumbling, command not to gather manna on day 7) except for the Sabbath-manna searchers, who come up empty. The sinners who have paid a price for their sins in Exodus so far are non-Israelites: Egyptians and Amalekites. That all changes in the post- covenant chap. 32. Fretheim (1991: 279) says of this incident, "It is Genesis 3 all over again." Similarly, Janzen (1997: 226) remarks, "It is Israel's version of the universal human turn in Genesis 2–3." Moberly (2008: 48) suggests that because Israel has just recently entered into a holy covenant with Yahweh at Sinai, where the people still remain, the sin of chap. 32 is "**like committing adultery on one's wedding night.**" (ED: THAT LAST COMMENT IS ESPECIALLY INTRIGUING BECAUSE YAHWEH HAD IN EFFECT TAKEN ISRAEL AS HIS BRIDE - THE RATIFYING OF THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT WAS IN A SENSE A SEALING OF THEIR "MARRIAGE COVENANT" [SEE [Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage](#)] - SEE Isaiah 54:5, Jeremiah 32:4). ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the significance of 40 days in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- Douglas Stuart's Excursus: The Attraction of Idolatry

**Steven Cole** - Exodus 32 is one of the scariest chapters in the Bible. It ranks up there with 2 Samuel 11, where David, the man after God's heart, fell into adultery and murder; and with the Gospel accounts of the apostle Peter's denials of Christ. It's scary because prior to Exodus 32, Aaron had some spiritual experiences that far exceed anything that any of us have ever had. He had seen God bring the ten plagues on Egypt. He watched God part the Red Sea for Israel and then bring it back over the pursuing Egyptian army. He saw the pillar of fire and the cloud that God provided for Israel's protection in the wilderness. He had eaten the daily manna and had drunk water from the rock. At God's invitation, Aaron, along with his sons and the elders of Israel had gone up on the mountain to see the God of Israel and to eat and drink in His presence (Exod. 24:9-11). But then, after all of these displays of God's glory and power, while Moses was on the mountain meeting with God, Aaron quickly yielded to the people's request and fashioned the golden calf for Israel to worship. My initial reaction is to ask, "How could he do that? How could a man who had had these amazing encounters with God have so easily fallen into idolatry?" ([Avoiding Spiritual Compromise Exodus 32:1-35](#))

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A number of parallels exist between what happened at Mount Sinai and what happened here on the plains of Moab.

### COMPARISON OF EXODUS 32 AND NUMBERS 25 Parallels between Mount Sinai and the Plains of Moab

SIMILARITY	MOUNT SINAI	PLAINS OF MOAB
Revelation followed by rebellion	Ex 20-31/Ex 32	Numbers 23-24/Numbers 25
Worship of false god	Golden calf, Ex 32:8	Baal of Peor, Numbers 25:3
God's anger stopped by an immediate execution of those guilty	Ex 32:26-28	Numbers 25:7-8
Response resulting in priesthood	Tribe of Levi, Ex 32:29	Phinehas, Numbers 25:11-13
Census	Ex 30:12	Numbers 26:2-4
Laws regarding sacrifice	Ex 34:25	Numbers 28:1-8
Laws regarding festivals	Ex 34:18-24	Numbers 28:11-31
Inheritance	Ex 32:13	Numbers 27:1-11
Joshua	Ex 32:17	Numbers 27:18-23
Sabbath	Ex 35:1-3	Numbers 28:9-10

Source: Moody Bible Commentary

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### Look Back

We have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. —Hebrews 3:14

Today's Scripture: Hebrews 3

What was wrong with the ancient Israelites? Why did they have such trouble trusting God? In Hebrews 3, we're reminded that they heard God's promise yet refused to believe. I think I know why—we have the same problem today.

God provided for the people on their desert march. They would be satisfied and happy for a while, but then a new crisis would arise. They would stare ahead at their wall of trouble, become frightened, and lose faith.

Before Moses went up the mountain to get instructions from God, the Israelites had recently defeated the Amalekites. Things were going fine. But when Moses stayed on the mountain too long, the people panicked.

Instead of looking back and recalling that God could be trusted, they looked ahead and saw nothing but the possibility of a leaderless future. So they sought to create "gods that shall go before us" (Exodus 32:1). Their trust was blocked by a fear of the future when it could've been solidified with a simple look back at God's deliverance.

Likewise, our obstacles appear huge. We need to look back and reassure ourselves by recalling what God has already done on our behalf. That backward look can give us forward confidence. By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I have learned to love my Savior,  
And I trust Him more each day;  
For no matter what the trial,  
He will always be my stay.  
—Hess

Fear hinders faith, but trust kindles confidence.

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**Question: [Why is idol worship such a powerful temptation?](#)**

**Answer:** Ultimately, the answer to this question is “sin.” It is the sin nature of man that causes us to worship modern idols, all of which are, in reality, forms of self-worship. The temptation to worship ourselves in various ways is a powerful temptation indeed. In fact, it is so powerful that only those who belong to Christ and have the Holy Spirit within them can possibly hope to resist the temptation of modern idolatry. Even then, resisting the worship of idols is a lifelong battle that is part of the Christian life (Ephesians 6:11; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3).

When we hear the word idol, we often think of statues and objects reminiscent of those worshiped by pagans in ancient cultures. However, the idols of the 21st century often bear no resemblance to the artifacts used thousands of years ago. Today, many have replaced the “golden calf” with an insatiable drive for money or prestige or “success” in the eyes of the world. Some pursue the high regard of others as their ultimate goal. Some seek after comfort or a myriad of other passionate, yet empty, pursuits. Sadly, our societies often admire those serving such idols. In the end, however, it doesn’t matter what empty pleasure we chase after or what idol or which false god we bow down to; the result is the same—separation from the one true God.

Understanding contemporary idols can help us to understand why they prove to be such a powerful temptation. An idol can be anything we place ahead of God in our lives, anything that takes God’s place in our hearts, such as possessions, careers, relationships, hobbies, sports, entertainment, goals, greed, addictions to alcohol/drugs/gambling/pornography, etc. Some of the things we idolize are clearly sinful. But many of the things we idolize can be very good, such as relationships or careers. Yet Scripture tells us that, whatever we do, we are to “do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31) and that we are to serve God only (Deuteronomy 6:13; Luke 16:13). Unfortunately, God is often shoved out of the way as we zealously pursue our idols. Worse yet, the significant amount of time we often spend in these idolatrous pursuits leaves us with little or no time to spend with the Lord.

We sometimes also turn to idols seeking solace from the hardships of life and the turmoil present in our world. Addictive behaviors such as drug or alcohol use, or even something like excessive reading or television viewing, may be used as a means of temporarily “escaping” a difficult situation or the rigors of daily life. The psalmist, however, tells us that those who place their trust in this behavior will, essentially, become spiritually useless (Psalm 115:8). We need to place our trust in the Lord “who will keep [us] from all harm” (Psalm 121:7) and who has promised to supply all of our needs when we trust in Him. We also need to remember the words of Paul, who teaches us not to be anxious about anything, but rather to pray about everything so the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, can guard our hearts and our minds (Philippians 4:6–7).

There is another form of idolatry prevalent today. Its growth is fostered by cultures that continue to drift away from sound biblical teaching, just as the apostle Paul warned us, “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3). In these pluralistic, liberal times, many cultures have, to a large degree, redefined God. We have forsaken the God revealed to us in Scripture and have recast Him to comply with our own inclinations and desires—a “kinder and gentler” god who is infinitely more tolerant than the One revealed in Scripture. One who is less demanding and less judgmental and who will tolerate many lifestyles without placing guilt on anyone’s shoulders. As this idolatry is propagated by churches around the world, many congregants believe they are worshiping the one, true God. However, these made-over gods are created by man, and to worship them is to worship idols. worshiping a god of one’s own making is particularly tempting for many whose habits and lifestyles and drives and desires are not in harmony with Scripture.

The things of this world will never fully satisfy the human heart. They were never meant to. The sinful things deceive us and ultimately lead only to death (Romans 6:23). The good things of this world are gifts from God, meant to be enjoyed with a thankful heart, in submission to Him and for His glory. But when the gift replaces the Giver or the created replaces the Creator in our lives, we have fallen into idolatry. And no idol can infuse our lives with meaning or worth or give us eternal hope. As Solomon beautifully conveys in the book of Ecclesiastes, apart from a right relationship with God, life is futile. We were created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27) and designed to worship and glorify Him as He alone is worthy of our worship. God has placed “eternity in man’s heart”

(Ecclesiastes 3:11), and a relationship with Jesus Christ is the only way to fulfill this longing for eternal life. All of our idolatrous pursuits will leave us empty, unsatisfied, and, ultimately, on the broad road that most people take, the one that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13). (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://www.GotQuestions.org))

**Exodus 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."**

NET Exodus 32:2 So Aaron said to them, "Break off the gold earrings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

NLT Exodus 32:2 So Aaron said, "Take the gold rings from the ears of your wives and sons and daughters, and bring them to me."

ESV Exodus 32:2 So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

NIV Exodus 32:2 Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me."

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:2 And Aaron says to them, Take off the golden ear-rings which are in the ears of your wives and daughters, and bring them to me.

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

CSB Exodus 32:2 Then Aaron replied to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me."

NKJ Exodus 32:2 And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

NRS Exodus 32:2 Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

YLT Exodus 32:2 And Aaron saith unto them, 'Break off the rings of gold which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring in unto me;'

- Ex 12:35,36 Ge 24:22,47 Jud 8:24-27 Eze 16:11,12,17 Ho 2:8
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Aaron said to them** - Where is his protest and argument? Where is his priestly reasoning? Where are his red flags of refutation and rebuke? It cometh forth not from the mouth of Aaron, to his eternal shame! Remember Aaron had been higher up on the mountain and had even enjoyed sweet fellowship with Jehovah as he celebrated the meal marking the ratification of the Book of the Covenant.

**THOUGHT** - There is surely a lesson here for all of us. We can never trust in past "mountaintop" experiences with God to strengthen us for life in the valley. So what is the answer? I think Jesus would say "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God." (Mt 4:4+). Memories of spiritual highs are wonderful, but daily bread fortifies us for life in the valleys!

**Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me** - Tear off means to remove the ear rings (cf Ge 35:4, Jdg 8:24+ = Gideon made an ephod). This is most likely the gold acquired from the Egyptians (see Ex 12:35,36+).

**Bush - Aaron said unto them, break off the golden ear-rings** &c. The very jewels, without doubt, of which they had despoiled their oppressors at their departure from Egypt, and at the Red Sea. But what shall be said of the conduct of Aaron on this emergency? We have no intimation in the text that he remonstrated at all against the monstrous suggestion, or endeavored in the least to convince the people of their sin and folly in the measure they proposed; and yet we would fain, if possible, find some extenuation of the course pursued by so good a man on this occasion. There is perhaps a shadow of ground, on which to erect a

charitable apology for Aaron in this part of the transaction. The proposal that they should break off and give up their ear-rings may have been made in the secret hope, that they would be unwilling to devote their choicest treasures to this object, and that while they were wavering in reference to the project, Moses might return and by his presence crush the growing evil in the bud. But the result showed that it is not safe to try experiments upon the readiness of sinners to make sacrifices for their lusts, and that his true course was at once to have stood up and boldly resisted their insolent and impious demands, even at the hazard of his life. His not taking this resolute stand, and in humble trust in God braving all consequences, but pusillanimously yielding to their importunities, gave a kind of public and official sanction to the whole proceeding, in consequence of which the people would naturally rush on with tenfold violence in their chosen way. How fearful the example of a great and good man succumbing to the urgency of a lawless mob! How deplorable the issues when the appointed barriers to iniquity become, by their yielding, its abettors! ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

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## Commandment 2—Refuse Idolatry

Read: Exodus 32:1-14

You shall not make for yourself a carved image. —Exodus 20:4

Years ago, Life magazine carried on its cover an artist's rendering of God as an old man with long white hair and stern facial features.

Charles Hodge said, "Idolatry consists not only in the worship of false gods, but also in the worship of the true God by images."

Any visual portrayal of deity can be dangerous. No created thing can convey God's true and complete character. That's why God commanded Israel not to make any image or likeness of anything in heaven or on earth as an object of worship. Such images dishonor God because they distort His glory, and this can lead to sin.

Theologian J. I. Packer suggests that the people of Israel intended to worship Jehovah when Aaron made the golden calf. He says they were using the bull-image as a reminder of God's great might in delivering them from Egypt. But strength is just one aspect of His character. The calf showed nothing of His holiness. Thus the people turned the "feast to the Lord" into a wild, sensual party (Ex. 32:5-8).

To worship an image or picture of any Person of the Trinity is idolatry and veils God's glory. It leads us astray. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:24). Dennis J. DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;  
All praise we would render—O help us to see  
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!  
—Smith

God made us in His image, but we cannot make Him in ours.

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

NET Exodus 32:3 So all the people broke off the gold earrings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron.

NLT Exodus 32:3 All the people took the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron.

ESV Exodus 32:3 So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron.

NIV Exodus 32:3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron.

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

LXE Exodus 32:3 And all the people took off the golden ear-rings that were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

ASV Exodus 32:3 And all the people brake off the golden rings which were in their ears, and brought them

unto Aaron.

CSB Exodus 32:3 So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron.

NKJ Exodus 32:3 "So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

NRS Exodus 32:3 So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

YLT Exodus 32:3 and all the people themselves break off the rings of gold which are in their ears, and bring in unto Aaron,

- Jdg 17:3,4 Isa 40:19,20 46:6 Jer 10:9
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron- All the people** is surely hyperbole for it is unlikely that all the people of up to a million of women and children would have given their earrings to Aaron.

Bush makes an interesting point - All the people brake off, &c. The sequel shows that the phrase 'all the people' is not to be taken in its most literal sense, for there were some that still refused to give in to the general act of rebellion; but the majority were unanimous, and promptly resigned their ornaments; thus teaching us that the impulse of a mad and foolish superstition is sometimes sufficiently powerful to overrule the principles of pride and avarice, and that the charges of idolatry are more cheerfully met than the expenses of the true religion. **Alas! how is the niggardliness of the people of God in maintaining the services of his worship rebuked by the liberality and self-sacrifices of the votaries of idols!** ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Exodus 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."**

NET Exodus 32:4 He accepted the gold from them, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molten calf. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

NLT Exodus 32:4 Then Aaron took the gold, melted it down, and molded it into the shape of a calf. When the people saw it, they exclaimed, "O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

ESV Exodus 32:4 And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

NIV Exodus 32:4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:4 And he received them at their hands, and formed them with a graving tool; and he made them a molten calf, and said, These are thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

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

CSB Exodus 32:4 He took the gold from their hands, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a calf. Then they said, "Israel, this is your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!"

NKJ Exodus 32:4 And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

NRS Exodus 32:4 He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

YLT Exodus 32:4 and he receiveth from their hand, and doth fashion it with a graving tool, and doth make it a molten calf, and they say, 'These thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'

- **fashioned:** Ex 20:23 De 9:16 Ps 106:19-21 Isa 44:9,10 46:6 Ac 7:41 17:29
- a graving: Ex 28:9,11
- calf: 1Ki 12:28,32 2Ki 10:29 2Ch 11:15 13:8 Ho 8:4,5 10:5 13:2
- These: Ex 32:8 Jud 17:3,4 Ne 9:18 Isa 40:18,19 Ro 1:21-23
- which brought: Ex 32:1,8 20:2
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## AARON THE ARTIST OF THE IDOL!

**He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool - He took** in the Septuagint is [dechomai](#) (in the [middle voice](#) = receive to oneself) which normally means taking something with a favorable attitude! What did he receive? The gold. This suggests that Aaron himself was the "creator" of this "god." The verb **fashioned** (tsur) is used in the NASB only here and 1 Ki 7:15 ("he fashioned the two pillars") and is translated with the verb plasso meaning to "manufacture something by molding a soft substance" (BDAG) and was used of God creating Adam (Ge 2:7, 8, 15). The meaning of graving tool is not clear. In Ex 32:24 Aaron said "I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf." The point is that Aaron seems to be the one who choose the calf image as their idol! Amazing!

**Guzik** - This wasn't the Spirit-inspired craftsmanship of Bezaleel and Aholiab mentioned in Exodus 31:1–6. This was the sin-inspired work of Aaron. He thought it out, melted the gold, molded it, and fashioned it carefully with an engraving tool. ([Exodus 32 Commentary](#))

**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."**- The Hebrew word **molten** ([massēkā](#)) a Hebrew word for "(cast) idol" (Ex 34:17; Lev. 19:4; Dt. 9:12, 16; 27:15; Jdg. 17:3, 4; 18:14; 2 Ki 17:16; Hos 13:2; etc.). This is a direct violation of the second commandment "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth." (Ex 20:4) The statement **brought you up from the land of Egypt** shows the delusion of idolatry, for this idol had not existed the day before.

**Guzik on calf** - "Calf is not a good translation of the Hebrew egel. A young bull in his first strength is meant: for instance, the word can describe a three-year-old animal (Genesis 15:9)." ([Exodus 32 Commentary](#))

**NET Note on calf** - The word means a "young bull" and need not be translated as "calf" (although "calf" has become the traditional rendering in English). The word could describe an animal three years old. Aaron probably made an inner structure of wood and then, after melting down the gold, plated it. The verb "molten" does not need to imply that the image was solid gold; the word is used in Isa 30:22 for gold plating. So it was a young bull calf that was overlaid with gold, and the gold was fashioned with the stylus.

**Kaiser on this is your god** - Jeroboam borrowed this statement when he installed the two golden calves at the division of the kingdom in 931 B.C. (1 Kings 12:28). ([EBC-Ex](#))

**Hamilton** - Occasionally the calf is an acceptable sacrifice (Lev. 9:2–3, 8), but most often it is a common designation for an idol (Deut. 9:16, 21; 1 Kings 12:28, 32; 2 Kings 10:29; 17:16; 2 Chron. 11:15; 13:8; Neh. 9:18; Ps. 106:19; Hosea 8:5–6; 13:2)....Not only can you worship and obey him, but now you can also produce him! You can be responsible for his existence even if the product is intended only for surrogacy. ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**John Hannah** - Some commentators have suggested that this represented the Egyptian bull-god Apis, but this seems unlikely because Apis was not worshiped as an image. Even so, the bull symbolized fertility and sexual strength. This explicitly violated the second commandment (20:4–6; cf. 20:23), which the people had already received from God verbally through Moses. Perhaps the people considered the calf-idol an image of God. Since only one idol was made, the word gods (32:1, 4, 8, 23, 31) may refer both to the idol and to God whom it supposedly represented. It seems unlikely that Aaron would attribute the Exodus to anyone but the true God.(BKC)

**Morris** - The "calf" was a common pagan symbol of fertility. The people were undoubtedly very familiar with Apis, the sacred bull of Egypt. Its worship was accompanied by promiscuous sexual activities, the meaning of "play" in Exodus 32:6,25.

**Bush - Made it a molten calf.** The motive for giving this form to a representation of the Deity, is doubtless to be proximately traced to their familiarity with the idol worship of Egypt. That people were in the habit of paying divine honors to Apis in the form of an ox or bull, and this probably offered the hint to the Israelites on the present occasion. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Bush - These be thy gods, O Israel, &c** That is, this is thy god, O Israel; in accordance with what we have already said above of the import of the phrase. The tenor of the observations just made must be our clue to the right construction of this language. Aaron

did not intend to say that this molten image was the real and veritable God who had brought them out of Egypt, but simply that it was his visible symbol; and not improbably his secret hope was, that on this account they would make the due mental discrimination, and not be so sottish as to worship it. But the act was in direct contravention of the second commandment, and that it was regarded by the Spirit of God as an instance of downright, unequivocal idolatry, we are assured upon the testimony of the apostle, 1 Cor. 10:7, 'Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them.' So also Ps. 106:19, 'They made a call in Horeb and worshipped the molten image.' 'How oft, alas! have we abused God's mercy; taking his jewels, and making a golden calf of them!' Trapp. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Criswell** - A sacred bull or calf was common to pagan fertility religion. In disobedience of Yahweh's command in 20:4-6, the people seem to have equated Him with this calf (v. 5). Aaron makes the whole sacrilege worse still through his refusal to accept responsibility. The people were at fault, according to Aaron (v. 22), and the calf apparently formed itself (v. 24)! The statement in v. 4 may also be understood as "These are your gods," in that the calf represented the "gods" who had delivered Israel. The demonstrative pronoun and the verb "brought" are grammatically plural. The common word for "god" used here, *^elohim* (Heb.), is plural in form, but could be either singular or plural in meaning.

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## Blurred Vision

Read: Exodus 32:1-20

We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God. —1 Corinthians 2:12

Although I'm closer to 80 than 70, I still want to think of myself as "a modern man." So I keep up with the news, read current books, and use up-to-date sources when I research a subject. But more important, I want to be thoroughly biblical and Christian in all my thoughts and actions. Because of this, some people who don't like my convictions see me as being narrow-minded.

One temptation we face as believers is to adapt our views to our culture so that we will not be seen as out of touch with the modern world. When we give in to this tendency, however, we find ourselves compromising what we know is right. We find ways to justify immoral behavior that society finds acceptable. We may say that we still believe in the Bible, but we reinterpret its clear meaning on moral and spiritual issues and try to make it say what we want it to say.

Exodus 32 describes how the Israelites allowed their sinful desires to blur their spiritual vision. They wanted to be like their pagan neighbors, so they made an idol and had a sensual worship service. This angered both Moses and the Lord, and resulted in severe judgment.

If we don't take God's Word seriously, our spiritual vision becomes blurred and we will disobey Him. Herbert Vander Lugt [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If I would win the plaudits of the world,  
Then I must lose the presence of my Lord;  
I cannot please the godless by my works  
And still enjoy the blessings of His Word.  
—Smith

Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold.

**Exodus 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."**

NET Exodus 32:5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow will be a feast to the LORD."

NLT Exodus 32:5 Aaron saw how excited the people were, so he built an altar in front of the calf. Then he announced, "Tomorrow will be a festival to the LORD!"

ESV Exodus 32:5 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."

NIV Exodus 32:5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD."

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:5 And Aaron having seen it built an altar before it, and Aaron made proclamation saying, To-morrow is a feast of the Lord.

ASV Exodus 32:5 And when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-morrow shall be a feast to Jehovah.

CSB Exodus 32:5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; then he made an announcement: "There will be a festival to the LORD tomorrow."

NKJ Exodus 32:5 So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD."

NRS Exodus 32:5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the LORD."

YLT Exodus 32:5 And Aaron seeth, and buildeth an altar before it, and Aaron calleth, and saith, 'A festival to Jehovah -- to-morrow;'

- **Aaron:** 1Sa 14:35 2Ki 16:11 Ho 8:11,14
- **proclamation:** Lev 23:2,4,21,37 1Ki 21:9 2Ki 10:20 2Ch 30:5
- **feast:** Ex 32:4 10:9 12:14 1Ki 12:32,33 1Co 5:8
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **AARON THE ALTAR MAKER AND LEADER OF FALSE WORSHIP**

**Now when Aaron saw this** - Saw what? Either the calf-idol or the people's positive reaction or some both. The NLT paraphrases it (and this is an interpretation) as "Aaron saw how excited the people were."

**He built an altar before it** - This clearly indicates that this was not a casual event but one that took on the trappings of true religion. Otherwise, why make the effort to actually build an altar. Note the altar was **before** the idol, where before ([panim/paniym/paneh](#)) means in essence face to face with the idol. As Cole puts it "this is an organized cult, with statue, altar, priest and festival."

**THOUGHT** - Backsliding is usually progressive -- **BE VERY CAREFUL** when you directly, willfully disobey a known command of God, even to the point of overruling your conscience. You are on the proverbial slippery slope, where one sin easily slips into a second, etc. And here we see **Aaron the artisan** fashioning a false god, then slip into **Aaron the altar maker**, leading the people into false worship! And later when confronted by Moses he adds self-deception and lying (I put gold in and this calf popped out)! So in short order Aaron broke Commandments number 1, 2 and 9 (Ex 20:3-6, 16+ and probably #3 taking the LORD's name in vain [Ex 20:7+] when he equated the false god with Jehovah - Ex 32:4 "this is your god...") See discussion of [BACKSLIDING](#). You can mark it down beloved disciple of Jesus that...

**Sin will take you further than you ever wanted to stray!**  
**Cost you more than you ever dreamed you would pay!**  
**Keep you longer than you ever thought you would stay!**

**Stuart** makes an interesting observation on **an altar before it** - Building an altar in front of a god/idol conformed to the expected positioning of sacrifices in idolatry; it guaranteed that the god would see the offerings made to him and accept them. By contrast the orthodox biblical positioning of the altar in the courtyard of the tabernacle, and later temple, so that there was no direct line of sight from the ark in the holy of holies to the altar because of the curtain/veil hiding the ark was actually a positioning that required Israelites to have the faith to understand that the one true God actually saw what they did for him without having his idol right behind and facing the altar on which they did it.

**NET Note** on **before** - "Before it" means before the deity in the form of the calf. Aaron tried to redirect their worship to Yahweh, but the people had already broken down the barrier and were beyond control (U. Cassuto, Exodus, 413).

**Guzik** - It was bad enough to have a golden calf the people praised for their escape from Egypt. This second step of Aaron's was worse. He honored and sanctified the idol with animal sacrifice. He made the calf, and then he made the altar to worship it. ([Exodus 32 Commentary](#))

**And Aaron made a proclamation and said** - Aaron seems to be "all in" regarding this idol-calf and now calls for a "worship service." The Septuagint for **made a proclamation** ([gara](#)) is [kerusso](#) which is a bit ironic as kerusso is frequently used in the NT of proclaiming good news (cf Mk 1:4, Mk 13:10).

**Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD** - Note that the **feast** is not in honor of the idol but of Jehovah, **to the LORD**. This would support the premise that the calf-idol was intended to be a representation of Jehovah (cf Dt 4:12-22, 23, 24), i.e., [syncretism](#).

**Hamilton** on Aaron's "decision to proclaim "a festival to the LORD tomorrow" (v. 5b) is not an attempt to temper the Israelites' egregious sin as much as it is an act of baptizing blasphemy. Love may cover a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8). Religious activity does not. This is the one time I am aware of in the Bible where somebody's building an altar gets him into a lot of hot water. A simple altar of dirt or undressed stones (Exod. 20:24–26), or a blood-spattered altar (Ex 24:6), yes. An altar on the heels of god-making, no. The contrast between Moses's building an altar (Ex 24:4) and Aaron's building an altar (Ex 32:5) is transparent. Understandably, Aaron does not use the altar that Moses has built for the ceremony of sealing the covenant. ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**NET Note** on **feast** - The word is חַג ([chag/khag](#)), the pilgrim's festival. This was the word used by Moses for their pilgrimage into the wilderness. Aaron seems here to be trying to do what Moses had intended they do, make a feast to Yahweh at Sinai, but his efforts will not compete with the idol. As B. Jacob says, Aaron saw all this happening and tried to rescue the true belief (Exodus, 941).

**Bush- And Aaron made a proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast to the Lord.** Heb. חַג לַיהוָה hag laihovah, a feast to, for, or of Jehovah. By Aaron's building an altar and proclaiming this feast to the true God, it would seem that he still proposed within himself to lead the thoughts of the people through the outward medium and fix them upon Jehovah himself, the only proper object of adoration. But such a mixture of divine and idolatrous worship ([SYNCRETISM](#)) never fails to mislead the mass of men, and though the priests of a corrupt religion, in imitation of Aaron, may plead that the use of paintings, images, and sacrifices, is intended merely as a help, by sensible media, to spiritual worship, yet there can be no doubt that its practical effects are always just the same with those here recorded, and that it comes under the same condemnation. Whatever were Aaron's private views or wishes, the transaction is thus again characterised by the Holy Ghost, Acts, 7:41, 'And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifices unto the idol, and rejoiced in the work of their hands.' So Jehu, led away by the same delusion, could boast of his zeal for the Lord of hosts, while yet he was a worshipper of the golden calves of Jeroboam, 2 Kings, 10:16, 29. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

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**Question:** [What is religious syncretism?](#)

**Answer:** Syncretism, as defined by the American Heritage Dictionary, is "the reconciliation or fusion of differing systems of belief." This is most evident in the areas of philosophy and religion, and usually results in a new teaching or belief system. Obviously, this cannot be reconciled to biblical Christianity.

Religious syncretism often takes place when foreign beliefs are introduced to an indigenous belief system and the teachings are blended. The new, heterogeneous religion then takes a shape of its own. This has been seen most clearly in Roman Catholic missionary history. Take, for example, the Roman Catholic Church's proselytizing of animistic South America. Threatened with the fear of death, natives were baptized into the church by the tens of thousands without any preaching of the Gospel whatsoever. Former temples were razed, with Catholic shrines and chapels built on the same spot. Natives were allowed to substitute praying to saints instead of gods of water, earth and air, and replaced their former idols with new images of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet, the animistic religion the natives had formerly practiced was never fully replaced—it was adapted into Catholic teachings, and this new belief system was allowed to flourish.

More recently, religious syncretism can be seen in such religious systems as the New Age, Hinduism, Unitarianism, and Christian Science. These religions are a blending of multiple different belief systems, and are continually evolving as the philosophies of mankind rise and fall in popularity.

Therein lies the problem, for syncretism relies on the whim of man, not the standard of Scripture. The Bible makes it very clear what true religion is. Think on just a few things stated in Scripture: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37); "Jesus replied, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6); "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31); and "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Religious [syncretism](#) is simply not compatible with true Christianity. In fact, any modification to biblical law and principle for the sake of a "better" religion is heresy (Revelation 22:18-19). (Source: [GotQuestions.org](#))

**Exodus 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.**

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

NLT Exodus 32:6 The people got up early the next morning to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. After this, they celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry.

ESV Exodus 32:6 And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

NIV Exodus 32:6 So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:6 And having risen early on the morrow, he offered whole burnt-offerings, and offered a peace-offering; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

ASV Exodus 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.

CSB Exodus 32:6 Early the next morning they arose, offered burnt offerings, and presented fellowship offerings. The people sat down to eat and drink, then got up to play.

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

NRS Exodus 32:6 They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

YLT Exodus 32:6 and they rise early on the morrow, and cause burnt-offerings to ascend, and bring nigh peace-offerings; and the people sit down to eat and to drink, and rise up to play.

- offered: Ex 24:4,5
- sat down: Nu 25:2 Jud 16:23-25 Am 2:8 8:10 Ac 7:41,42 1Co 10:7 Rev 11:10
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**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** - Note the phrase **they rose early**, etc, indicating their zeal to worship the idol. They couldn't wait. **Burnt offerings** are completely consumed but peace offerings are for fellowship, in this case sadly communion with an idolatrous manifestation of Jehovah.

Psalms 106:19-23

19 They **made a calf in Horeb**  
And **worshiped a molten image.**  
20 Thus they **exchanged their glory**  
For **the image of an ox that eats grass.**

What was "**their glory**?" Was it not the Glorious God Who had delivered them and spoken to them? They fell into the same trap we see in Romans when one forgets God

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them (**IT WAS EVEN EVIDENT ON MT SINAI TO ISRAEL!**); for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature (**ISRAEL HAD SEEN ALL OF THESE ATTRIBUTES!**), have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God (ISRAEL KNEW THE TRUE GOD), they did not honor Him as God or give thanks (THE SLIPPERY SLOPE BEGINS), but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened (NOTE: WAS DARKENED IS A "DIVINE PASSIVE" = WHEN WE DENY

HIS CLEAR LIGHT, BEWARED FOR HE GIVES US OVER TO SPIRITUAL DARKNESS!). 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and **exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God** for an image in **the form of corruptible** man and of birds and **four-footed animals** and crawling creatures. 24 Therefore God gave them over (**paradidomi in active voice = God willing actively did this!**) in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that (**WHAT WAS GOD'S PURPOSE?**) their bodies would be dishonored among them (IS THIS WHAT THE REVELRY WAS ABOUT? THE TEXT IS NOT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR BUT IS CERTAINLY SUGGESTIVE OF IMMORAL BEHAVIOR). 25 For (TERM OF EXPLANATION - HERE IS THE SUMMARY EXPLANATION) they **exchanged the truth of God for a lie**, and **worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen.** (Ro 1:17-25+)

**Stuart** - Again imitating orthodoxy through idolatry, the people "sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings," which were forms of offering otherwise appropriate for Yahweh (on burnt offerings see Ex 10:25; 18:12; 20:24; 24:5; 29:18, 25, 42; 30:9, 28; 31:9; on fellowship offerings see Ex 20:24–25; 29:28). "**Burnt offerings**," also known as "whole burnt offerings," sought atonement for the worshiper's sin. "**Fellowship offerings**," also known as "sacrifices/offerings of well-being" celebrated the worshiper's ongoing covenant relationship with Yahweh. ([NAC-Exodus](#))

Peace Offerings in the OT - Exod. 20:24; Exod. 24:5; Exod. 29:28; Exod. 32:6; Lev. 3:1; Lev. 3:3; Lev. 3:6; Lev. 3:9; Lev. 4:10; Lev. 4:26; Lev. 4:31; Lev. 4:35; Lev. 6:12; Lev. 7:11; Lev. 7:13; Lev. 7:14; Lev. 7:15; Lev. 7:18; Lev. 7:20; Lev. 7:21; Lev. 7:29; Lev. 7:32; Lev. 7:33; Lev. 7:34; Lev. 7:37; Lev. 9:4; Lev. 9:18; Lev. 9:22; Lev. 10:14; Lev. 17:5; Lev. 19:5; Lev. 22:21; Lev. 23:19; Num. 6:17; Num. 6:18; Num. 7:17; Num. 7:23; Num. 7:29; Num. 7:35; Num. 7:41; Num. 7:47; Num. 7:53; Num. 7:59; Num. 7:65; Num. 7:71; Num. 7:77; Num. 7:83; Num. 7:88; Num. 10:10; Num. 15:8; Num. 29:39; Deut. 27:7; Jos. 8:31; Jos. 22:23; Jos. 22:27; Jdg. 20:26; Jdg. 21:4; 1 Sam. 10:8; 1 Sam. 11:15; 1 Sam. 13:9; 2 Sam. 6:17; 2 Sam. 24:25; 1 Ki. 3:15; 1 Ki. 8:63; 1 Ki. 8:64; 1 Ki. 9:25; 2 Ki. 16:13; 1 Chr. 16:1; 1 Chr. 16:2; 1 Chr. 21:26; 2 Chr. 7:7; 2 Chr. 29:35; 2 Chr. 30:22; 2 Chr. 31:2; 2 Chr. 33:16; Prov. 7:14; Ezek. 43:27; Ezek. 45:15; Ezek. 45:17; Ezek. 46:2; Ezek. 46:12; Amos 5:22

Notice that **peace offerings** were described in the ceremony leading to the ratification of the Book of the Covenant - He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. (Ex 24:5). How quickly they perverted what should have been a fellowship celebration with a glorious God into a fellowship celebration with a golden calf

**Guzik** - They served their idol with eagerness, energy, and personal sacrifice. People usually find a way to rise early for the things that are really important to them. This shows that Israel was willing to give their time, their sleep, and their money in the service of this idol. ([Exodus 32 Commentary](#))

**Trapp** says "'Aaron might make a calf, but the people made it a god, by adoring it."

**Bush** - **And they rose up early, &c.** Eagerly intent upon their idolatrous service, and apparently uneasy at its being delayed so long as until the morrow, they lost no time on the ensuing morning in bringing their burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, although of sin-offerings, which they most needed, we find no mention. They thoughtlessly exulted in the celebration of a festival which was soon to prove so fatal to them. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Bush** - **Sat down to eat and to drink.** That is, upon the remainder of the oblation of peace-offerings, to a share of which the offerers were entitled. The burnt-offerings were wholly consumed as holocausts. By thus partaking of these offerings they were brought into **forbidden fellowship with the idol**, as is clear from the reasonings of Paul, 1 Cor. 10:17–21. The **sad consequences of this apostasy** they were soon made to experience. God's jealousy burns very fiercely about his altar. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**And rose up to play** - The meaning of this phrase is not absolutely clear, for on one hand it could describe a celebration in general but on the other hand could have sexual overtones. The same verb **play** is translated "**caressing**" (Isaac caressing his wife) in Ge 26:8 and is translated in the Septuagint with the same verb **paizo** used to translate play in Ex 32:6. The only NT use of paizo is by Paul in describing Exodus 32 in 1 Cor 10:7 where he writes "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO **PLAY** (paizo)." **John MacArthur** for one feels that "**PLAY**" in 1 Cor 10:7 is "a euphemism for the gross sexual relations which followed the excessive feasting." While I personally favor that this idolatrous feast in Exodus 32 was associated with some element of immorality, it is not possible to be absolutely dogmatic. Either way, the sons of Israel were hardly "innocent," and in fact in later writings God castigates Israel His "wife" for her faithlessness and her going "a whoring (read prophecy in Dt 31:16KJV)!"

**Hamilton on to play** - The extremes are to understand it as referring to a sexual orgy or simply to playful celebration. It is clear how the NIV translators read the last word of v. 6, lēšhēq, "to indulge in revelry." Childs (1974: 566) refers to "a religious orgy" that has

begun, and Alter (2004: 495) speaks of “a bacchanalian celebration.” Toorn (1989: 202) says that the verb is “an unmistakable euphemism for sexual activities, like Akkadian *šāḥu*.” ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**NET Note on to play** - The form is *לִשְׂחֵק* (*létsakheq*), a Piel infinitive construct, giving the purpose of their rising up after the festal meal. On the surface it would seem that with the festival there would be singing and dancing, so that the people were celebrating even though they did not know the reason. W. C. Kaiser says the word means “drunken immoral orgies and sexual play” (“Exodus,” EBC 2:478). That is quite an assumption for this word, but is reflected in some recent English versions (e.g., NCV “got up and sinned sexually”; TEV “an orgy of drinking and sex”). The word means “to play, trifle.” It can have other meanings, depending on its contexts. It is used of Lot when he warned his sons-in-law and appeared as one who “mocked” them; it is also used of Ishmael “playing” with Isaac, which Paul interprets as mocking; it is used of Isaac “playing” with his wife in a manner that revealed to Abimelech that they were not brother and sister, and it is used by Potiphar’s wife to say that her husband brought this slave Joseph in to “mock” them. The most that can be gathered from these is that it is playful teasing, serious mocking, or playful caresses. It might fit with wild orgies, but there is no indication of that in this passage, and the word does not mean it. The fact that they were festive and playing before an idol was sufficient.

**Stuart** - Moses later described shouting (v. 17), singing (v. 18), and dancing (v. 19), but not the sort of cultic prostitution the Israelites later indulged in at another location (Num 25), and identified the people’s sin as idolatry per se (vv. 31–32; 34–35). The revelry of the occasion was apparently singing and dancing with abandon, bad enough as a means of celebration of the people’s newfound relationship with an idol.

**Currid on to play** - The verb translated ‘to play’ has a variety of possible nuances. It appears in the general sense of ‘laughter / teasing’ in the Old Testament (see Gen. 19:14). At times it specifically refers to dancing (Ex 32:19; Jdg 16:25). In other instances, it reflects sexual activity (see Gen. 26:8; 39:14, 17). Perhaps it is being used here in a generic way, which includes all these nuances. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**Bush - Rose up to play.** Heb. *לִשְׂחֵק* *letzahēk*. A word of ominous import, implying not only such sports as singing, dancing, and merry-making in general, but in some cases also a species of conduct which the epithet *wanton* as correctly defines as any term which we deem it proper to employ. Compare the use of the same original word, rendered ‘mock,’ Gen. 39:14 Compare also Num. 25:1, 2. In like manner it appears that the ancient sacrificial feasts among the Gentiles were so frequently turned into scenes of voluptuous revelling and drunkenness, that Athenæus informs us, that by the early Greeks, the word *μεθυσειν*, to be drunk, was supposed to be derived from *μετα το θυειν*, after the sacrifices, when they gave themselves up to large drinking. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Currid** - The idea of syncretism is certainly not something unheard of today. I recently heard of a native American church that meets on a reservation in the western United States, where the pastor repeatedly tells his flock that they may keep the old Indian ways, and also attempt to keep the message of the Bible. Unfortunately, many of those old ways are teachings contradictory to Scripture, and the attempt to keep both has led to much false teaching. Cults, such as the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses, constantly claim to be ‘Christian’ churches—although their denial of the deity of Christ condemns them as no churches at all. We need to be very careful not to allow elements from other religions to seep into Christianity. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

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**Question:** [What sort of pagan revelry did the Israelites indulge in \(Exodus 32:6\)?](#)

**Answer:** In Exodus 32 Moses returns from talking with the Lord on the mountain and finds that the Israelites have turned to sinful actions. Verse 6 says, “The people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.” What exactly was this “revelry” that followed the Israelites’ feast?

The context helps identify the main actions that offended the Lord. First, verse 4 notes that the people gave offerings to [a golden calf](#). They had already broken the first of the [Ten Commandments](#) before Moses had even returned to them! And verse 6 mentions that feasting and drinking were part of the festivities.

Second, Moses had identified the noise emanating from the camp as “the sound of singing” (Exodus 32:18). In their pagan revelries, the people of Israel were singing songs of adoration to the golden calf. In the not-so-distant past, they had been singing praise to the Lord after He led them safely through the [Red Sea](#) (Exodus 15). Now their tune had changed.

Third, the people of Israel danced as part of their celebration of the golden calf. Verse 19 says, “When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.” Dancing per se is not noted as wrong, but dancing in celebration of an idol made Moses (and God) angry.

Fourth, there was an unrestrained attitude of partying around the golden calf. Ex 32:25 presents the shameful truth: “The people were running wild . . . Aaron had let them get out of control and so [they became] a laughingstock to their enemies.” Details of their

behavior are not given, but their actions were unruly, uncivilized, and ungodly.

In turning to a graven image, the people had turned away from the Lord (see Deuteronomy 9:16). Even though the golden calf had been billed as the god they had been following all along (Exodus 32:4), the True God cannot be reduced to imagery. The Lord will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 42:8). That is why God judged the people of Israel at the foot of [Mount Sinai](#). (Source: [GotQuestions.org](#))

**Exodus 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.**

NET Exodus 32:7 The LORD spoke to Moses: "Go quickly, descend, because your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have acted corruptly.

NLT Exodus 32:7 The LORD told Moses, "Quick! Go down the mountain! Your people whom you brought from the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

ESV Exodus 32:7 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.

NIV Exodus 32:7 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt.

KJV Exodus 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:

LXE Exodus 32:7 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Go quickly, descend hence, for thy people whom thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt have transgressed;

ASV Exodus 32:7 And Jehovah spake unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, that thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:

CSB Exodus 32:7 The LORD spoke to Moses: "Go down at once! For your people you brought up from the land of Egypt have acted corruptly.

NKJ Exodus 32:7 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

NRS Exodus 32:7 The LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely;

YLT Exodus 32:7 And Jehovah saith unto Moses, 'Go, descend, for thy people whom thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt hath done corruptly,

- **Go:** Ex 19:24 33:1 De 9:12 Da 9:24
- **people:** Ex 32:1,11
- **corrupted:** Ge 6:11,12 De 4:16 32:5 Jud 2:19 Ho 9:9
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**GET DOWN  
QUICKLY!**

Exodus 32:7-14 describes God's anger and Moses' intercession for Israel.

**Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people-** Apparently 40 days is abruptly brought to a halt. As the NLT says "Quick! Go down the mountain!" It is as if God is saying "These are **your** people, not **My** people!" Throughout all the whole series of events connected with the exodus God had referred to them as '**My people**' (Ex 3:7; Ex 3:10; Ex 5:1; Ex 6:7; Ex 7:4; Ex 7:16; Ex 8:1; Ex. 8:8; Ex 8:20; Ex 8:21; Ex 8:22; Ex 8:23; Ex 9:1; Ex 9:13; Ex 9:17; Ex 9:27; Ex 10:3; Ex 10:4; Ex 22:25). Some writers (Kaiser) feel this suggests that Jehovah is preparing to "disown" the people. So God is finished giving Moses laws and ordinances and now engages Moses in a discussion of the fate of the sons of Israel. Moses quickly reverses this in Ex 32:11 asking "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?"

**NET Note on your people** - By giving the people to Moses in this way, God is saying that they have no longer any right to claim him as their God, since they have shared his honor with another. This is God's talionic response to their "*These are your gods who brought you up.*" The use of these pronoun changes also would form an appeal to Moses to respond, since Moses knew that God had brought them up from Egypt.

**Bush - And the Lord said unto Moses Go, get thee down, &c.** As if the urgency of the occasion would naturally give the utmost intensity to the language, the Greek here adds the word 'quickly,' as does Moses indeed himself in speaking of the incident, Deut. 9:12, 'Arise, get thee down quickly.' The people, abandoning themselves to unhallowed revelry, thought neither of God, before whom they had so recently trembled, nor of Moses, their venerable leader and friend, nor of the ten commandments to which they had a few weeks since so solemnly sworn obedience, and one of which in the most express terms forbade the very crime of which they were now guilty. Giving themselves up to licentious mirth, they thought only of the present moment. But here we learn how the matter was viewed on the mount. This ought in fact to have been their chief concern—not how they regarded it, but how it was looked upon from above. But this was neglected, and the same neglect is continually evinced by heedless transgressors intent upon sensual pleasures. Ah, did they but reflect that there is an unsleeping eye ever watchful over their career, and a true estimate incessantly making up of their conduct, which will finally come to them in the form of a fearful indictment, what a salutary damper would it throw upon their profane hilarities! How needful is it for us often while sporting on the plain, to think of the judgment formed of our conduct on the mount! ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Bush - Thy people.** A tone of indignation breathes through this language, as if the offending people had forfeited all right to be longer considered God's people, and he had utterly cast them off; 'for thy people have corrupted themselves.' The effect of sin is to write 'Lo-ammi,' not my people, upon the most chosen servants of Jehovah. 'But in this mode of speech something gracious was concealed. A hint was, as it were, given him to gainsay the Lord, and to put him upon the thine and the thou. Of this he immediately availed himself and said, '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?' Krummacher. The original term for 'corrupted' implies both their idolatry and the consequent judgments which they had brought upon themselves, according to the twofold sense of the same word, Gen. 6:11–13, on which see Note. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Whom you brought up from the land of Egypt** - Previously repeatedly God had said He was the One Who had **brought** them out of Egypt (Ex 6:7, Ex 12:17, Ex 16:32, Ex 19:4, Ex 20:2, Ex 29:46). He seems to be "distancing" Himself from these covenant breakers. In Ex 32:1 the people said Moses "brought us up from the land of Egypt". Moses reverses this in Ex 32:11 declaring to God "Your people whom **You have brought out** from the land of Egypt."

**Have corrupted themselves** - The idea is that they have become to morally "decay" and are on their way to ruin and destruction. The verb *shachath* describes things that are ruined and fit only to be destroyed. Isn't that what idols often do to those who are ensnared by them? Notice that corruption is associated with idolatry (Dt 4:16, 25). It is fascinating that Jehovah does not mention Aaron's role in Israel's act of apostasy, but the "cross hairs" are directed specifically to the nation of Israel.

In a parallel passage "Then the LORD said to me, **Arise, go down** from here quickly, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly. ([shachath](#)). They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made a molten image for themselves.' (Dt 9:12, cf Dt 32:7)

Moses warned the second generation ""So **watch** yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, **so that** (PURPOSE) you do not act corruptly ([shachath](#)) and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female,." (Dt 4:15-16) God gives the second generation a prophetic warning that they will act "corruptly" ([shachath](#)) in Dt 4:25-26.

**Have corrupted** (corrupt)(07843)([shachath](#)) means to decay, to go to ruin, to corrupt, to destroy (Sodom and Gomorrah = Ge 13:10, Ge 18:28, 31-32), to lay waste (Egypt from swarms of flies -Ex 8:24). *Shachath* is used of Israelites who worshiped the golden calf (Ex 32:7; Dt 9:12; 32:5, Hos 9:9). God warned He would destroy Israel if they were turned away from following Him (Nu 32:15). *Shachath* describes Israel's behavior as more corrupt after a judge died (Jdg 2:19). The verb is used literally to describe a girdle irreparably damaged by water (Jer. 13:7), a spoiled piece of clay pottery that it is thrown away (Jer. 18:4), and a well whose water is polluted (Pr 25:26). It is used figuratively to describe human actions so morally corrupt that God always responds in destruction'

The first 3 uses of **shachath** are very instructive for they resulted in a worldwide flood, even as Israel's corruption would result in worldwide shame at her ignominious defeat by godless pagans...

Now the earth was **corrupt** (Lxx = *phtheiro* = cause loss of soundness, ruin, destroy, kill. Corruption derives from "the lusts of deceit" Eph 4:22-[note](#)) in the sight of God (cp Pr

15:3), and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was **corrupt** (Lxx = [kataphtheiro](#) = "rotten"! ) for all flesh had **corrupted** (Lxx = [kataphtheiro](#)) their way upon the earth. 13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. (Ge 6:11-13)

God prophesied of Israel's corruption...

For I know that after my death you **will act corruptly** (shachath) and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands." (Deuteronomy 31:29)

Despite Israel's repeated sin, God remained faithful to the Abrahamic Covenant...

For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor **destroy** (shachath; Lxx = ektribo = obliterate) you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them. (Deuteronomy 4:31+)

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## Fast Freeze

Go down quickly from here, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have . . . quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. —Deuteronomy 9:12

Today's Scripture: Deuteronomy 9:9-16

Thanks to Internet technology, I can watch ice building up on Lake Michigan from my warm office 30 miles away. The changing angle of the sun's rays in winter chills the earth. Frigid temperatures turn surging water into rock-hard ice in a surprisingly short time. Witnessing this rapid transition reminds me of how quickly our hearts can turn cool toward God.

That happened to the ancient Israelites. After God miraculously rescued them from slavery, they became impatient when Moses climbed Mt. Sinai to meet God and didn't return according to their timetable. So they got together and created their own god (Exodus 32:1). The Lord told Moses to hurry back down the mountain because the people had so quickly turned away (Deuteronomy 9:12).

When situations don't unfold according to our timetable, we might assume that God has lost interest in us. When we no longer feel close to Him, our hearts may grow cold. But God is always with us. As the psalmist wrote, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?" (Psalm 139:7).

Even when God seems distant, He's not. His presence fills heaven and earth (vv.8-10). There's never a reason to let our hearts freeze over. By: Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all Thy quickening powers;  
Kindle a flame of sacred love  
In these cold hearts of ours.  
—Watts

The question is not where is God, but where isn't He?

**Exodus 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!'"**

NET Exodus 32:8 They have quickly turned aside from the way that I commanded them— they have made for themselves a molten calf and have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt.'

NLT Exodus 32:8 How quickly they have turned away from the way I commanded them to live! They have

melted down gold and made a calf, and they have bowed down and sacrificed to it. They are saying, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"

ESV Exodus 32:8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'"

NIV Exodus 32:8 They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:8 they have quickly gone out of the way which thou commandedst; they have made for themselves a calf, and worshipped it, and sacrificed to it, and said, These are thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

ASV Exodus 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 unto it, and said, These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

CSB Exodus 32:8 They have quickly turned from the way I commanded them; they have made for themselves an image of a calf. They have bowed down to it, sacrificed to it, and said, 'Israel, this is your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.'"

NKJ Exodus 32:8 "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!'"

NRS Exodus 32:8 they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'"

YLT Exodus 32:8 they have turned aside hastily from the way that I have commanded them; they have made for themselves a molten calf, and bow themselves to it, and sacrifice to it, and say, These thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'

- **turned:** De 9:16 Jdg 2:17
- **which I:** Ex 20:3,4,23
- **This is:** Ex 32:4 1Ki 12:28
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **FAIR WEATHER WORSHIPERS!**

### **Related Passages:**

Ex 20:3+ "You shall have no other gods before Me.

Ex 20:4+ "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

Ex 20:23+ 'You shall not make other gods besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves.

Remember how quick Israel was to enter the covenant "Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!" (Ex 24 3+) "Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" (Ex 24:7+)

**They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them-** Note God's adverb **quickly!** This is a veritable understatement! The Hebrew word for **quickly** (maher) has the sense always of doing something in a hurry, hastily, even rashly

because of being in haste. The Septuagint translates **quickly** with [tachus](#) means without delay and focuses on on speed of an activity or event. What a picture of Israel! Israel directly disobeyed the second commandment, which should have been one of the foremost in their mind. But you can forget a lot in 40 days if you are not careful! Note God's use of the description **the way** instead of **the law**. The point is that the law is good and it shows us **the way** to walk to be blessed and to be pleasing to God. The law is not meant to steal our freedom, but to enable us to walk in **the way** that is truly free, the path of obedience which always brings blessing.

**Bush - They have turned aside quickly, &c.** This language might properly be used considering the very short time that had passed since they heard the law from mount Sinai, and promised obedience, and were afterwards warned not to 'make to them gods of silver or of gold.' **They quickly forgot his works; but the punishment which their sudden defection incurred admonishes us, that nothing is more provoking in the eyes of heaven than a speedy backsliding after solemnly renewing out covenant with God, or receiving special mercies at his hand.** ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**NET Note on turned aside** - The verb is a perfect tense, reflecting the present perfect nuance: "they have turned aside" and are still disobedient. But the verb is modified with the adverb "quickly" (actually a Piel infinitive absolute). It has been only a matter of weeks since they heard the voice of God prohibiting this.

**THOUGHT** - We need to read and weep and learn, for how often to we read some great truth about God which stirs our heart and then later in the day or week when tempted we succumb as if we had no moral compass and no Spirit enabled self-control!

**They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it**- Note God does not say they just "made it" but "made it for themselves," which speaks to their own fleshly desires. They wanted a "god" they could see, so they made one for themselves! Notice God says they did not worship Him or sacrifice to Him but "IT," referring to the image. Even if they were just using the calf as an image of Jehovah, God declares flatly they they were not worshiping or sacrificing to Him. And don't miss the meaning of the word **worshiped** ([shachah](#)) means to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to crouch, to fall down, to humbly beseech, to do reverence. The idea is to assume a prostrate position as would in paying homage to royalty (Ge 43:28) The Septuagint uses [proskuneo](#) (in [perfect tense](#) - describes them as bowing down and remaining in an "state" of worship). Their worship was not casual but committed!

**Stuart** had an excellent comment - They made for **"themselves"** a metal-plated idol (rather than merely being camped near where one existed already or rather than having a few people try to make a crude clay idol) "in the shape of a bull", bowed down to it ("worshiped it," clearly indicating their belief that it was a god), "sacrificed to it" (further proving their belief that it had the power to bless and save them), openly stated that it represented the gods they now had chosen to believe in (thus also potentially violating the first commandment against worshiping any god but Yahweh), and attributed to the idol their rescue from Egypt, thus associating Yahweh syncretistically with the young bull, as if now, finally, Yahweh could be properly worshiped and his presence properly represented among them in contrast to the inferior ways it had been previously manifest. Since God himself had chosen his ways of personal manifestation in the past (fire, smoke, pillar, overpowering voice), the people's choice of a dumb idol who could do none of these things over the living God was also a rejection of his methods of demonstrating his presence. What they could see and touch at their convenience was what they wanted—a god who would let them live as they wished and have a good time when they wanted to and who would not impose his covenant requirements on them. Theirs was a foolish choice reflecting badly on any people so self-absorbed and self-destructive as to make it.

**THOUGHT** - We need to be careful not to fall into the deceptive trap in which we are thinking that because we are going through the motions in a religious sense (worshiping and singing and giving/sacrificing), such acts may not be acceptable to God. If our heart is not truly fixed on God and His glory and honor, then all these human acts are not accepted by God Who is Jealous for His glory!

**And said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt**- Here God in effect quotes Aaron's words. In effect, they

**Turned aside** ([05493](#))([sur](#)) basically means to change direction, to turn away, to go away, to desert, to quit, to keep far away, to stop, to take away, to remove, to be removed, to make depart. Literally of turning aside or departing from the road a person is traveling (Jdg 18:3, 15) or departing from a road or path by turning aside from the original course (Ex 3:3; Dt. 2:27; Jdg. 18:3; 19:15; Ru 4:1; 1 Sam. 6:12; 1 Ki 22:32; Jer.5:23); to step out of line militarily (1 Ki 20:39); to retreat from a path (Ge 49:10; Ex 8:27; Nu 12:10; 14:9; Dt. 4:9; Jdg. 16:19; 1 Sa 6:3; 16:14)' Used figuratively, it has to do with the moral direction someone is taking; turning from the right road. Israel turned aside from the way of their ancestors walked (Jdg. 2:17) and away from God's commands (Mal 3:7). Israel's leaders exhorted them not to turn aside from the right way (Dt.77:20; Josh. 23:6;

1 Sa 12:20, 21). To stay on course is to turn neither to the right or to the left (Dt. 2:27; 5:32; Josh 1:7; 2 Ki 22:2).

**Gilbrant** - The intransitive verb *sûr* occurs about 300 times in the OT. The root's primary meaning is "to turn aside." The direction of movement is often indicated by prepositions to enhance its meaning. Such prepositions include *min*, "from"; *'al*, "on," "upon"; and *'el* "to," "toward." In Middle Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic, the word came to mean "to examine." A cognate in Samaritan means "to remove," and a verb in Old South Arabian means "to separate." A cognate in Akkadian means "to revolve."

Of the 300 or so occurrences, about 160 are in the Qal (simple) stem and 130 in the Hiphil (causative). A remaining few are in the Hophal (causative passive). Often *sûr* refers to a thing as departing or turning aside (persons, animals, qualities, the abstract). Spiritual and moral application is predominant, in particular with respect to the righteous path. *Sûr* is employed to indicate direction toward or away from following God's laws. The Hiphil (generally, "to remove") is commonly used in matters of ritual and related cultic activities (direct and implied). As men choose to depart from God, He accordingly determines to depart from them. Over two-thirds of the occurrences in the Hiphil stem have a direct theological bearing.

Several times the verb occurs to describe the turning aside of humans. Samson turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion he had killed, which had become covered with bees and honey (Judg. 14:8). Boaz requested his kinsman to turn aside and sit down (Ruth 4:1); before commencing his military campaign, Saul warned the Kenites to turn aside from Amalekite territory (1 Sam. 15:6). The verb is also used to describe the removing of non-human objects: as requested by Pharaoh, the frogs and flies departed from Egypt (Exo. 8:11, 29); Noah removed the covering of the ark when the floodwaters had subsided (Gen. 8:13); Egypt's scepter would pass away (Zech. 10:11).

About to embark upon the conquest of Canaan, Joshua put forth the challenge that the people not deviate from Yahweh's law, neither to the right nor the left (Josh. 1:7). Regarding Israel's inclination to vacillate in their commitment, the Lord concluded, "They are quickly turned aside out of the way which commanded them" (Deut. 9:12). When Israel would have a king, they were not to turn away from the Lord (1 Sam. 12:20). If a parent will instruct his child in the way, as an adult he will "not depart from it." "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil" (Prov. 16:17).

With the Hiphil stem, *sûr* frequently means "to remove." It serves appropriately in cultic or religious activities, reiterating trust and obedience to Yahweh. Samuel challenged the Israelites to remove their foreign gods and once again trust solely in the Lord (1 Sa 7:3). Hezekiah removed the high places that the Israelites used for sacrificing to a graven image, and trusted only in the Lord (2 Ki. 18:4). The reformer Josiah not only removed the high places and shrines, but in his zeal desecrated them too in an attempt to force the Israelites to return to God (2 Ki. 23:19). Although Jehu, a northern king, had done much to discourage Baal worship in Samaria, he did not turn away from Jeroboam's sins, and he did not put these sins behind (2 Ki. 10:29). In contrast, Judah's righteous king, Hezekiah, remained true to the Lord (2 Ki. 18:6).

*Sûr* is common in the rituals surrounding temple activity and worship. The fat and kidneys were to be removed from the sacrificial animal (Lev. 3:4, 10, 15). The officiating priest "should pluck away [the pigeon's] crop" (Lev. 1:16). With respect to bulls offered for sin offerings, their kidneys and fat were to be removed (4:9). The fat was to be removed from goats and lambs offered for sin offerings (Lev. 4:31, 35). Figuratively, a man should avoid wrongdoing (Prov. 4:27). The prideful heart is one that has departed from the Lord (Ps. 101:4).

Men are prone to disregard God in their lives, relying on their own strengths. They fail to recognize that this attitude may work both ways: God may disregard them! Samson neglected his Nazirite vow and in the defining moment, he was powerless; "He did not know that the Lord had departed from him" (Judg. 16:20). Saul became aware of the Lord's absence when he said, "God is departed from me" (1 Sam. 28:15). In his anger over Israel's sin, God "removed them out of his sight" (2 Ki. 17:18).

Ultimately, Yahweh's intent is restoration. He will renew his covenant and impart greater blessing. He will "remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 11:19, NIV). His people will remove all the images and detestable idols (Ezek. 11:18). At this time, they will never turn from God (Jer. 32:40). ([Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary](#))

Sur - 282v - abolished(1), avoid(1), beheaded\*(1), cut off(1), degenerate(1), depart(45), departed(7), deposed(1), deprives(2), do away(1), escape(1), get(1), go away(1), gone(1), keep away(1), keeps away(1), lacks(1), leave\*(2), left(2), move(1), pardoning(1), pass away(1), past(1), put away(12), relieved(1), remove(45), removed(43), removing(1), retract(1), return(1), separated(1), strip away(1),

swerve(1), take(2), take away(7), take off(1), taken away(14), takes away(1), took(3), took away(2), took off(2), turn(8), turn aside(25), turn away(12), turn...aside(1), turned(2), turned aside(24), turned away(3), turning aside(1), turning away(3), turns aside(1), turns away(3), undone\*(1), wanderer(1), withdrawn(1).

Sur - Gen. 8:13; Gen. 19:2; Ge 19:3; Ge 30:32; Ge 30:35; Ge 35:2; Ge 38:14; Ge 38:19; Ge 41:42; Ge 48:17; Ge 49:10; Ex 3:3; Ex 3:4; Ex 8:8; Ex 8:11; Ex 8:29; Ex 8:31; Ex 10:17; Ex 14:25; Ex 23:25; Ex 25:15; Ex 32:8; Ex 33:23; Ex 34:34; Lev. 1:16; Lev. 3:4; Lev. 3:9; Lev. 3:10; Lev. 3:15; Lev. 4:9; Lev. 4:31; Lev. 4:35; Lev. 7:4; Lev. 13:58; Nu 12:10; Nu 14:9; Nu 16:26; Nu 21:7; Dt 2:27; Dt 4:9; Dt 5:32; Dt 7:4; Dt 7:15; Dt 9:12; Dt 9:16; Dt 11:16; Dt 11:28; Dt 17:11; Dt 17:17; Dt 17:20; Dt 21:13; Dt 28:14; Dt 31:29; Jos. 1:7; Jos. 7:13; Jos. 11:15; Jos. 23:6; Jos. 24:14; Jos. 24:23; Jdg. 2:17; Jdg. 4:18; Jdg. 9:29; Jdg. 10:16; Jdg. 14:8; Jdg. 16:17; Jdg. 16:19; Jdg. 16:20; Jdg. 18:3; Jdg. 18:15; Jdg. 19:11; Jdg. 19:12; Jdg. 19:15; Jdg. 20:8; Ruth 4:1; 1 Sam. 1:14; 1 Sam. 6:3; 1 Sam. 6:12; 1 Sam. 7:3; 1 Sam. 7:4; 1 Sam. 12:20; 1 Sam. 12:21; 1 Sam. 15:6; 1 Sam. 15:32; 1 Sam. 16:14; 1 Sam. 16:23; 1 Sam. 17:26; 1 Sam. 17:39; 1 Sam. 17:46; 1 Sam. 18:12; 1 Sam. 18:13; 1 Sam. 21:6; 1 Sam. 28:3; 1 Sam. 28:15; 1 Sam. 28:16; 2 Sam. 2:21; 2 Sam. 2:22; 2 Sam. 2:23; 2 Sam. 4:7; 2 Sam. 5:6; 2 Sam. 6:10; 2 Sam. 7:15; 2 Sam. 12:10; 2 Sam. 16:9; 2 Sam. 22:23; 1 Ki. 2:31; 1 Ki. 15:5; 1 Ki. 15:12; 1 Ki. 15:13; 1 Ki. 15:14; 1 Ki. 20:24; 1 Ki. 20:39; 1 Ki. 20:41; 1 Ki. 22:32; 1 Ki. 22:43; 2 Ki. 3:2; 2 Ki. 3:3; 2 Ki. 4:8; 2 Ki. 4:10; 2 Ki. 4:11; 2 Ki. 6:32; 2 Ki. 10:29; 2 Ki. 10:31; 2 Ki. 12:3; 2 Ki. 13:2; 2 Ki. 13:6; 2 Ki. 13:11; 2 Ki. 14:4; 2 Ki. 14:24; 2 Ki. 15:4; 2 Ki. 15:9; 2 Ki. 15:18; 2 Ki. 15:24; 2 Ki. 15:28; 2 Ki. 15:35; 2 Ki. 16:17; 2 Ki. 17:18; 2 Ki. 17:22; 2 Ki. 17:23; 2 Ki. 18:4; 2 Ki. 18:6; 2 Ki. 18:22; 2 Ki. 22:2; 2 Ki. 23:19; 2 Ki. 23:27; 2 Ki. 24:3; 1 Chr. 13:13; 1 Chr. 17:13; 2 Chr. 8:15; 2 Chr. 14:3; 2 Chr. 14:5; 2 Chr. 15:16; 2 Chr. 15:17; 2 Chr. 17:6; 2 Chr. 20:10; 2 Chr. 20:32; 2 Chr. 20:33; 2 Chr. 25:27; 2 Chr. 30:9; 2 Chr. 30:14; 2 Chr. 32:12; 2 Chr. 33:8; 2 Chr. 33:15; 2 Chr. 34:2; 2 Chr. 34:33; 2 Chr. 35:12; 2 Chr. 35:15; 2 Chr. 36:3; Neh. 9:19; Est. 3:10; Est. 4:4; Est. 8:2; Job 1:1; Job 1:8; Job 2:3; Job 9:34; Job 12:20; Job 12:24; Job 15:30; Job 19:9; Job 21:14; Job 22:17; Job 27:2; Job 27:5; Job 28:28; Job 33:17; Job 34:5; Job 34:20; Job 34:27; Ps. 6:8; Ps. 14:3; Ps. 18:22; Ps. 34:14; Ps. 37:27; Ps. 39:10; Ps. 66:20; Ps. 81:6; Ps. 101:4; Ps. 119:29; Ps. 119:102; Ps. 119:115; Ps. 139:19; Prov. 3:7; Prov. 4:24; Prov. 4:27; Prov. 5:7; Prov. 9:4; Prov. 9:16; Prov. 11:22; Prov. 13:14; Prov. 13:19; Prov. 14:16; Prov. 14:27; Prov. 15:24; Prov. 16:6; Prov. 16:17; Prov. 22:6; Prov. 27:22; Prov. 28:9; Eccl. 11:10; Isa. 1:16; Isa. 1:25; Isa. 3:1; Isa. 3:18; Isa. 5:5; Isa. 5:23; Isa. 6:7; Isa. 7:17; Isa. 10:13; Isa. 10:27; Isa. 11:13; Isa. 14:25; Isa. 17:1; Isa. 18:5; Isa. 25:8; Isa. 27:9; Isa. 30:11; Isa. 31:2; Isa. 36:7; Isa. 49:21; Isa. 52:11; Isa. 58:9; Isa. 59:15; Jer. 2:21; Jer. 4:1; Jer. 4:4; Jer. 5:10; Jer. 5:23; Jer. 15:5; Jer. 17:5; Jer. 17:13; Jer. 32:31; Jer. 32:40; Lam. 3:11; Lam. 4:15; Ezek. 6:9; Ezek. 11:18; Ezek. 11:19; Ezek. 16:42; Ezek. 16:50; Ezek. 21:26; Ezek. 23:25; Ezek. 26:16; Ezek. 36:26; Ezek. 45:9; Dan. 9:5; Dan. 9:11; Dan. 11:31; Dan. 12:11; Hos. 2:2; Hos. 2:17; Hos. 4:18; Hos. 7:14; Hos. 9:12; Amos 5:23; Amos 6:7; Zeph. 3:11; Zeph. 3:15; Zech. 3:4; Zech. 9:7; Zech. 10:11; Mal. 2:8; Mal. 3:7

**Exodus 32:9 The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.**

NET Exodus 32:9 Then the LORD said to Moses: "I have seen this people. Look what a stiff-necked people they are!

NLT Exodus 32:9 Then the LORD said, "I have seen how stubborn and rebellious these people are.

ESV Exodus 32:9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people.

NIV Exodus 32:9 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people.

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

LXE Exodus 32:9

ASV Exodus 32:9 And Jehovah said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

CSB Exodus 32:9 The LORD also said to Moses: "I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people.

NKJ Exodus 32:9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked

people!

NRS Exodus 32:9 The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are.

YLT Exodus 32:9 And Jehovah saith unto Moses, 'I have seen this people, and lo, it is a stiff-necked people;

- **I have seen:** De 9:13 Jer 13:27 Ho 6:10
- **an obstinate:** Ex 33:3,5 34:9 De 9:6,13 10:16 31:27 2Ch 30:8 Ne 9:17 Ps 78:8 Pr 29:1 Isa 48:4 Zec 7:11,12 Ac 7:51
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A STIFFNECKED PEOPLE

### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 9:13+ "The LORD spoke further to me, saying, 'I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stubborn people.

Jeremiah 13:27 "As for your adulteries and your lustful neighings, The lewdness of your prostitution On the hills in the field, I have seen your abominations. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! How long will you remain unclean?"

Hosea 6:10+ In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; Ephraim's harlotry is there, Israel has defiled itself.

Note that it is Jehovah holding court in Ex 32:7-10. Moses is silent (and perhaps a bit stunned, startled, dumbfounded!)

**The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold - Behold** is [hinneh](#) which calls for Moses to pay attention to this next statement. The omniscient God saw not just their external rebellious acts but their internal hard, rebellious hearts that led to those acts. Whereas before God had called them My people, now He refers to them with what amounts to a rebuke as "this people!"

**Currid** adds that "when God calls the Hebrews 'this people'; this reflects the disparaging way the Israelites had spoken of Moses back in Ex 32:1, calling him 'this Moses'. In an ironic twist, God applies the same disdainful deictic adjective that they had used of Moses to the people of Israel themselves." ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**They are an obstinate people - Obstinate** is two words in Hebrew, stiff and neck, and is an idiom derived from cattle used as draft animals whose power was concentrated in their neck (Hos 4:16, Jer 5:5) so in the figurative sense whoever resists the yoke is "hard-necked." Hebrew anthropology often portrays the inner will in terms of the heart, neck, and face. They were like a stubborn horse that refuses to respond to the rider's tug on the reins! Cole says obstinate "is a farmer's metaphor of an ox or a horse that will not respond to the rope when tugged." This idiom obstinate ("stiff-necked") occurs five more times all are in the Pentateuch (Ex. 33:3, 5; Ex 34:9; Dt. 9:6, 13) There is a similar expression "stiffen your neck" usually directed at Israel (Dt. 10:16; 2 Ki 17:14; 2 Chr 30:8; Neh 9:16, 17; Pr 29:1; Jer. 7:26; Jer 17:23). **Hamilton** adds "In most of these references the text connects neck stiffening with Israel's "fathers," in the wilderness generation. Imagine one generation that has become the paradigm of obstinacy! To be stiff-necked is to be intractable, like a beast of burden in order to go its own way. Here is stiff-necked Israel wanting a calf to represent its God, and ironically the calf/the bull is the beast of burden, which is well known to stiffen its neck." ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

Jehovah called Israel **obstinate**, or stiff-necked. They had grumbled before, when God had tested them about the water and food in Exodus 15:23-25+ and Exodus 16:2, 3, 7-9+. They had tested the Lord and quarreled with Moses in Exodus 17 again about the water. In Exodus 19:5-6+ Jehovah declared "if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." So all they had to do was obey His voice and keep His commands and they would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Instead 40 days later they were worshipping an idol.

Their **stiff necks** were a reflection of their root pathology which was their **hard hearts**.

The sad record of Israel's history is one generation of stiff-necked men and women after another (Dt 31:27, 2 Ki 17:14, 2 Chr 30:8, 36:13, Neh 9:16, 17, 29, Jer 7:26, 17:23, 19:15). The irony is that this same expression used of Pharaoh who was stiff-necked (his heart was hardened) in refusing to let Israel go to worship Yahweh. Now that they have been delivered to worship Yahweh, they became stiff-necked like Pharaoh!

**Kaiser** comments that "The "stiff-necked people" (v.9) would not bow under God's authority (cf. Jer 27:11-12), even though they had readily "bowed down" to the calf and worshiped it (v.8)." ([EBC-Ex](#))

**NET Note** - I have seen this people, &c. Targ Jon. 'The pride of this people is revealed before me.' The meaning is, I have long noted, observed, and studied, as it were, their disposition. I know their genius, and the character which I am constrained to give of them is, that they are a stiff-necked people. This is a metaphor taken from stubborn and intractable bullocks whose necks are brought with the greatest difficulty to submit to the yoke. Compare the equivalent allusion, Is. 48:4, 'Thy neck is an iron sinew,' which would not bend. Jer. 5:5, 'But these (the great men) have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds.'

**NET Note** on I have seen this people - This is a bold anthropomorphism; it is as if God has now had a chance to get to know these people and has discovered how rebellious they are. The point of the figure is that there has been discernible evidence of their nature.

**Obstinate** (harsh, stiff, stubborn) (07186)(**qasheh**) means hard, unpliant, harsh, cruel, severe, strong, violent, fierce. This term's basic function is to describe something as hard. Stubborn (Jdg 2:19, Isa 48:4) related to noun stubbornness (qesi) (Dt 9:27) and the verb to be stubborn (qsh) (Job 9:4). In Exodus 6:9 it describes Pharaoh as "cruel" (**skleros** meaning literally hard). The root **qāshî** apparently arose from an agricultural milieu. It emphasizes, first, the subjective effect exerted by an overly heavy yoke, which is hard to bear, and secondarily, the rebellious resistance of oxen to the yoke. Thus we see hard labor (Ex 1:14, Ex 6:9, 1 Ki 12:4, 2 Chr 10:4, Isa 14:3), Joseph's hard words (Ge 42:7, 30), Nabal was harsh (1 Sa 25:3), **Israel** was often described as **stubborn or obstinate** (Ex 32:9, 33:3, 33:5, 34:9, Dt 9:6, 13, Dt 31:27, Jdg 2:19), obstinate (Is 48:4, Ezek 3:7), oppressed ("hard") in spirit (Hannah in 1 Sa 1:15), hard or difficult legal question (Ex. 18:26), severe battle (2 Sa 2:17), wind (Isa. 27:8), vision (Isa. 21:2); difficult times (Job 30:25), a relentless sword (Isa. 27:1) and fierce jealousy (Song 8:6).

All uses of **qasheh** - Gen. 42:7; Gen. 42:30; Exod. 1:14; Exod. 6:9; Exod. 18:26; Exod. 32:9; Exod. 33:3; Exod. 33:5; Exod. 34:9; Deut. 9:6; Deut. 9:13; Deut. 26:6; Deut. 31:27; Jdg. 2:19; Jdg. 4:24; 1 Sam. 1:15; 1 Sam. 20:10; 1 Sam. 25:3; 2 Sam. 2:17; 2 Sam. 3:39; 1 Ki. 12:4; 1 Ki. 12:13; 1 Ki. 14:6; 2 Chr. 10:4; 2 Chr. 10:13; Job 30:25; Ps. 60:3; Cant. 8:6; Isa. 14:3; Isa. 19:4; Isa. 21:2; Isa. 27:1; Isa. 27:8; Isa. 48:4; Ezek. 2:4; Ezek. 3:7

**NET Note** on **Obstinate** - Jacob says the image is that of the people walking before God, and when he called to them the directions, they would not bend their neck to listen; they were resolute in doing what they intended to do (Exodus, 943). The figure describes them as refusing to submit, but resisting in pride.

**Exodus 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."**

Victor Hamilton So now, leave me be, so that my anger may blaze against them and annihilate them. But I will make of you a great nation."

NET Exodus 32:10 So now, leave me alone so that my anger can burn against them and I can destroy them, and I will make from you a great nation."

NLT Exodus 32:10 Now leave me alone so my fierce anger can blaze against them, and I will destroy them. Then I will make you, Moses, into a great nation."

ESV Exodus 32:10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you."

NIV Exodus 32:10 Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:10 And now let me alone, and I will be very angry with them and consume them, and I will make thee a great nation.

ASV Exodus 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.

CSB Exodus 32:10 Now leave Me alone, so that My anger can burn against them and I can destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

NKJ Exodus 32:10 "Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

NRS Exodus 32:10 Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation."

YLT Exodus 32:10 and now, let Me alone, and My anger doth burn against them, and I consume them, and I make thee become a great nation.'

- **Let me alone:** Ge 18:32,33 32:26-28 Nu 14:19,20 16:22,45-48 De 9:14,19 Jer 14:11 15:1 Jas 5:16
- **my :** Ex 32:11,19 22:24
- **I may:** Nu 14:12 De 9:14,19
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JEHOVAH COMMANDS LET ME ALONE

**Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them** - **Let Me alone** is literally "Let it rest!" In the parallel description in Dt 9:14 "Let Me alone" is a different Hebrew word and means basically "Loosen your grip from Me" and is used in Ps 46:10 ("Be still..."). **My anger may burn** is literally "that my nose may become hot." God gives a command for Moses not to bother Him. He states that His purpose is that in His blazing anger He would then destroy the nation. **Destroy** is [kalah](#) a verb meaning to bring a process to completion and here used negatively meaning to consume. God uses this same verb in Nu 16:21, 45 in His response to the rebellion of Korah. This is a command that Moses does not obey

**Stuart** - In saying "**Now leave me alone**" God made a rhetorical demand. He was challenging Moses rather than commanding him. Moses had no power to stop God from doing anything, so there would have been no need whatever for God to ask permission of Moses to do something through the statement "leave me alone." Rather, it was a rhetorical way of saying to Moses: "Here is what I will do unless you intervene."

**Kaiser** writes that "The God who seemed unmerciful, however, is the same God who had mercifully prepared Moses for just such an occasion as this. So God said, by way of testing Moses, "Leave me alone." But God would allow himself to be bound, as it were, by prepared persons doing prepared work in God's way." ([EBC-Ex](#))

**NET Note** on **let Me alone** - The imperative, from the word "to rest" (נָח, nuakh), has the sense of "leave me alone, let me be." It is a directive for Moses not to intercede for the people. B. S. Childs (Exodus [OTL], 567) reflects the Jewish interpretation that there is a profound paradox in God's words. He vows the severest punishment but then suddenly conditions it on Moses' agreement. "Let me alone that I may consume them" is the statement, but the effect is that he has left the door open for intercession. He allows himself to be persuaded—that is what a mediator is for. God could have slammed the door (as when Moses wanted to go into the promised land). Moreover, by alluding to the promise to Abraham God gave Moses the strongest reason to intercede.

**Bush - Now therefore let me alone, &c.** Chal. 'Leave off thy prayer before me.' Do not interpose by prayers and deprecations in their behalf. Moses had not yet opened his mouth, but God foresaw the holy violence with which his importunity would besiege his throne, and apparently desires him not to intercede for them. What greater or more significant proof could be given of the divine condescension to the petitions of a mortal? 'God is fain to bespeak his own freedom; as if Moses' devotion were stronger than God's indignation. Great is the power of prayer; able, after a sort, to transfuse a dead palsy into the hand of Omnipotence.' Trapp. The words, however, which seemed to forbid, were really intended to encourage Moses in his suit. They are not indeed a positive command to him to pray in behalf of Israel, but they indicated what it was that would stay the divine hand from punishing; and were equivalent to saying, 'If you intercede for them, my hands are tied, and I cannot execute the deserved vengeance.' Of this hint Moses would not be slow to avail himself. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Let Me alone** (05117) ([nuach/nuah](#)) means to rest or pause. **Nuach** essentially conveys a basic sense of absence of movement and of being settled in a particular place with overtones of finality. The basic meaning of *nūaḥ* is "rest," as in Ge 8:4, "The ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat," or in Ex 20:11 where God "rested on the seventh day."

**And I will make of you a great nation** - This is the exact promise God had given to Abraham (Ge 12:2, Ge 18:18). When Israel rebelled in Numbers, God gave Moses a similar, even slightly stronger offer (Nu 14:12). And since Moses was a human like all of us, this might have been a tempting and attractive offer, but such did not prove the case for the man Moses of whom God said no one was more humble (Nu 12:3). Moses was clearly not here for his glory, but for the glory of God.

**THOUGHT** - O, to be enabled by God's Spirit to imitate the pattern and practice of Moses, that we "will not be

sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Heb 6:12+)

**Alan Cole** - the people would now bear the tribal name of 'sons of Moses', not 'sons of Israel'. The price was only to abandon his shepherd's calling, and to let Israel go. Their own behaviour had earned their rejection, as he is reminded here. But no true shepherd could do this: so comes the intercessory prayer of Moses (Ex 32:11–13, taken up again in Ex 32:31, 32), reminiscent of the prayer of Abraham (Gen. 18:22–33). ([TOTC-Exodus](#))

**Bush - And I will make of thee a great nation.** As if the Most High would bribe the forbearance of his servant. The words evidently disclose a secret purpose to try the spirit of Moses, as if to see whether the prospect of becoming great and distinguished himself, would outweigh his regard for the interests of his people. He assaults him in a point where most men are most vulnerable but the noble disinterestedness of Moses was proof against the power of this appeal to the selfish principles of his nature, and the apparent dissuasives from intercession only urged him on with more vehemence in his suit. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Crisswell** - The command of God was a test similar to that given Abraham in Ge 22:2. The fate of Israel was being placed in the hands of Moses. God could not and would not retract His promise made to Abraham. If in His wrath He destroyed the nation because of their apostasy, He would then fulfill the covenant through the descendants of Moses. Moses could have given up the people who were guilty and exalted himself. However, he passed the test and proved that the preservation of his people was more important to him than the honor of becoming the founder of a new nation.

**Exodus 32:11 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?"**

NET Exodus 32:11 But Moses sought the favor of 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?"

NLT Exodus 32:11 But Moses tried to pacify the LORD his God. "O LORD!" he said. "Why are you so angry with your own people whom you brought from the land of Egypt with such great power and such a strong hand?"

ESV Exodus 32:11 But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?"

NIV Exodus 32:11 But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "O LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?"

KJV Exodus 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?

LXE Exodus 32:11 And Moses prayed before the Lord God, and said, Wherefore, O Lord, art thou very angry with thy people, whom thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt with great strength, and with thy high arm?

ASV Exodus 32:11 And Moses besought Jehovah his God, and said, Jehovah, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, that thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

CSB Exodus 32:11 But Moses interceded with the LORD his God: "LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people You brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a strong hand?"

NKJ Exodus 32:11 Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?"

NRS Exodus 32:11 But Moses implored the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?"

YLT Exodus 32:11 And Moses appeaseth the face of Jehovah his God, and saith, 'Why, O Jehovah, doth Thine anger burn against Thy people, whom Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a strong hand?'

- **Moses entreated:** De 9:18-20,26-29 Ps 106:23
- **why does Your anger burn:** Nu 11:11 16:22 De 9:18-20 Ps 74:1,2 Isa 63:17 Jer 12:1,2
- **whom You have brought out:** Ex 32:7
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSE THE MEDIATOR BECOMES MOSES THE INTERCESSOR

Moses turns down God's offer in Ex 32:10 and instead of seeking to be "Abraham #2," the "new patriarch," he chooses to be the intercessor. As Hamilton points out "Moses again and again participates in a ministry of intercession (Exod. 32:31–34; Ex 33:12–13, 15–16; Ex 34:8–9; Nu 12:11–13; Nu 14:13–19), yet he always places commitment to his people ahead of self-advancement and apparently never regrets that choice. He never says in hindsight, "Man, why did I turn down the chance to be number one?" ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Then Moses entreated the LORD his God** - Moses instead of taking God up on the offer to make him a great nation, shows his humility by becoming a great intercessor. Note that the Hebrew for **entreated** is actually two words which are more literally "smoothed the face of" or "soften the face of the LORD" which brings out the idea of his seeking to pacify and persuade Jehovah to show favor instead of wrath. The Hebrew verb **entreated** ([chalah](#) in the Piel) means to implore or to entreat the favor of and is frequently followed (as here) by the word for "face." . The Septuagint uses [deomai](#) which means to ask urgently, seek, beg someone in relation to something and the preposition **enanti** which means in the presence of, in front of, before.

James 5:13b+ The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Moses appealed to three things he knew God highly valued: (1) God's relationship with Israel = God Himself had chosen Israel (v11) (2) God's Name & reputation must be vindicated before the nations of the world (v12), (3) God had made promises in the Abrahamic covenant that could not be fulfilled if Israel were destroyed (v. 13).

**Thomas Constable** succinctly summarizes Moses' basis for intercession - God's previous work for Israel (Ex 32:11), God's glory and reputation (Ex 32:12), and God's word (Ex 32:13).

**Hamilton** summarizes it "(1) Why save Israel, then destroy the people? (v. 11); (2) Why give the Egyptians an opportunity to gloat? (v. 12); (3) How can you ignore the promise of an eternal covenant that you made with our ancestors? (v. 13). In the retelling of this story in Deuteronomy, Moses repeats these three reasons but in a different order: 1–3–2 (Deut. 9:26–29). At no point does Moses excuse the people for their sin. He never suggests that God is overreacting with "much ado about nothing." His appeal is entirely directed to God, and to his character, his reputation, and his past actions. Moses prays the way he prays not because of what he knows about his people, but he prays the way he does because of what he knows about his God." ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**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? - Anger** is [aph](#) the word for nose which recalls one who is angry and their nose begins to flare. **Burn** is [charah](#) which means to become hot, to be kindled and figuratively as in this passage meaning "hot with anger." Here we see Moses appealing to God reminding Him of His great and marvelous work of redemption/deliverance. In short, Moses appeals to the fact they are "**Your people**" and the fact that Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt with **great power and a mighty hand**. Destruction of Israel at this point would in effect "nullify the result of his demonstration of divine power." (Stuart)

**THOUGHT** - Think about this picture of Jehovah for a moment. This is the Omnipotent, All Powerful, perfectly Righteous and Holy God burning with anger! I shudder to think of His emotion toward me when I wantonly, selfishly commit some willful sin against Him! Woe! May this picture serve to engender in each of our hearts a holy, reverential fear so that we might by this Truth be strongly motivated to not rebel against His clear command and will. In Jesus' Name. Amen

**Guzik** - Moses refused to do nothing. He did not fatalistically say, "Well, whatever God will do, God will do." He pleaded with the LORD, according to what he believed to be God's heart. Moses' prayer was not long but it was strong. "It is not the length, but the strength of prayer that appeals to heaven." (Meyer). "Thus did Jehovah lead His servant into fellowship with the deepest things of His own heart. Therefore his intercession prevailed." (Morgan) ([Exodus 32 Commentary](#))

**Bush - Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, &c** This is not probably to be understood as an expostulation, as if there were not sufficient cause for God to be angry; but rather as an earnest entreaty that he would not in wrath consume them. The same usage of speech is common both in the prophets and the Psalms. Thus Ps. 44:23, 24, 'Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?' See also the interrogative

and optative modes of expression interchanged, Mat. 5:39, and Luke. 8:52, Mat. 8:29, and Luke, 8:28. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Johnston** has an interesting note on the value of intercessory prayer - Moses attempted to appease the LORD. This bold anthropomorphism (lit. "Moses attempted to "soften the face of the LORD") dramatically depicts the impact of intercessory prayer. The expression *hlh pnym* "to soften the face [of someone]" is used (1) literally of the physical action of caressing rough facial skin, and (2) figuratively of courting someone's favor (positive) or appeasing his anger (negative) (Ex 32:11; 1 Sa 13:12; 1 Ki 13:6; 2 Chr 33:12; Job 11:19; Ps 45:13; Ps 119:58; Pr 19:6; Jer. 26:19; Da 9:1.3; Zech 7:2; 8:21; Ma1. 1:9) For example, after God struck Jeroboam's hand so that it shriveled up, the king pleaded for the prophet to implore God to relent from his anger (1 Ki 13:6). When the LORD's anger burned against Israel for its sin, Jehoahaz pleaded that God might relent from judgment (2 Ki 13:3-4). When Manasseh was suffering in Babylonian imprisonment as divine discipline for his apostasy, he sought to "weaken the face" of God by repenting of his sin, and God restored him (2 Chr 33:12). When Micah announced that Jerusalem would be destroyed, Hezekiah sought to weaken the angry resolve of God, and the LORD relented-he did not bring the disaster he had pronounced against Zion (Jer 26:18-19). God Himself exhorts his sinful people to repent and to "implore" him to be gracious to them (Mal. 1:9). When the people fashioned the golden calf, Yahweh announced his intent to totally destroy the nation, sparing only Moses (Ex 32:9-10). But Moses interceded on their behalf, imploring the LORD to stand down from his resolve to destroy Israel, and to curb his anger. Amazingly; Moses succeeded in appeasing God's anger and weakening his resolve. This is powerful evidence that God is responsive to human entreaty. He does not simply answer prayers concerning what he already planned to do; he is also willing on occasion to alter his resolve and to do otherwise. In answer to the question, "**Can prayer change anything?**" the answer is a resounding, "Yes!" (ED COMMENT - HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THIS? "*prayer doesn't change anything; it only changes the prayer.*" WRONG!) Abraham negotiated with God to turn away his anger from destroying Sodom and Gomorrah on the condition that ten righteous people be found (Ge 18:20-32). Although such a small remnant did not exist, Abraham's negotiations won the rescue of Lot and his family. Moses proclaims that had he not fervently interceded on their behalf, God would have certainly destroyed the nation (Dt. 9:7-20). God later destroyed Jerusalem because he could not find anyone like Moses to stand in the gap to intercede for the people (Ezek. 22:30) (The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study - Gen- Deut)

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Peter Marshall emphasizes a point through restatement in his sermon "The Art of Moving Mountains":

I am sure that each of you has read this statement many times:

Prayer Changes Things

You have seen it painted on posters which adorn the walls of our Sunday school rooms.

You have seen it stamped on little metal plates,

read it in the Bible,

heard it from the pulpit, oh, so many times.

But do you believe it?

Do you actually, honestly, believe that prayer changes things?

Have you ever had prayer change anything for you?

- Your attitudes
- your circumstances
- your obstacles
- your fears?

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**Question:** [Does prayer change God's mind?](#)

**Answer:** This question can be best answered by breaking it into two questions: 1) Does prayer change God's mind? and 2) Does prayer change things? The answer to the first is, no, God does not change His mind. The answer to the second is, yes, prayer changes things. So how can prayer change circumstances without changing God's mind?

First of all, in order for God to change His mind, He would have to improve upon Himself in some way. In other words, if God changed His mind, that action would suggest that His first way of thinking was deficient, but, because we prayed, He improved His plan concerning our situation. We change our minds when we see a better way to do something. We thought A but realized B was better, so we change our mind. But, since God knows all things, the beginning from the end (Revelation 22:13; Ephesians 1:4), it is not possible for Him to improve upon any plan that He has made. His plans are already perfect (2 Samuel 22:31), and He has stated that His plans will prevail (Isaiah 46:9-11).

What about passages like Exodus 32:14 that seem to imply that God "repented of" His action? The Hebrew word *nacham*, often translated "repent" or "change one's mind," can also mean "sorrow" or "to bring comfort." Genesis 6:6 is the first occurrence of this

word in reference to the Lord: "The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled." This appears to mean that God had second thoughts about His decision to create human beings. But, since God's ways are perfect, we need to look for an alternate understanding. If we apply the secondary definitions of the word translated "regretted," we can understand this verse to mean that the wickedness of man brought great sorrow to God's heart, especially in light of what He must do to restore them.

Jonah 3:10 is another example of the Hebrew word *nacham*: "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened." In other words, God took comfort in the fact that He did not have to destroy the Ninevites as He had said He would. He did not change His mind; He already knew they would repent. His actions are always a part of His bigger plan that was formed before He created the world. Jeremiah 18:8 helps explain this concept: "And if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned." God is not changing His mind; He is taking comfort in the truth that man's repentance will curb the consequences that He, in His righteousness, has already established.

So if prayer does not change God's mind, why do we pray? Does prayer change our circumstances? Yes. God delights in changing our circumstances in response to our prayers of faith. Jesus instructed us to "always pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). First John 5:14–15 also reminds us that, when we pray according to God's will, He hears and answers. The key phrase is "according to His will." That will also includes His timing.

We can think of it this way: a father plans to give his daughter a car when she turns 16. He knows by that time she will have a job, be active in church and school activities, and be able to pay for her own insurance. But he also plans to wait to give it until she asks for it, because he wants her to value such a gift. But at age 11, she begins to beg for a car. She pleads, bargains, and gets angry when on her 12th, 13th, and 14th birthdays there is still no car. She matures a bit and stops asking, but then at 16 she approaches her father in a more thoughtful way, explains her need for a car, and expresses her confidence that her dad will take care of this need. In a very short time, he joyfully hands her the keys. Did he change his mind? No, he had always planned to give it to her. Did she need to ask? Yes, that was part of his decision.

In a similar way, our heavenly Father invites us to ask Him for everything we need. He delights to give it to us when it is within His plan. He knows we don't always understand His timing, but He expects us to trust and not doubt (James 1:5–6; Matthew 6:8). Our prayers help to align our hearts with His heart until His will is our highest goal (Luke 22:42). He promises to listen and grant the desires of our hearts when our hearts are wholly His (Psalm 37:4; 2 Chronicles 16:9). (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

**Exodus 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.**

Victor Hamilton - Why should the Egyptians say, 'For evil he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains, to annihilate them from off the face of the earth'? Turn away from your blazing anger and rescind the evil directed at your people.

NET Exodus 32:12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'For evil he led them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger, and relent of this evil against your people.

NLT Exodus 32:12 Why let the Egyptians say, 'Their God rescued them with the evil intention of slaughtering them in the mountains and wiping them from the face of the earth'? Turn away from your fierce anger. Change your mind about this terrible disaster you have threatened against your people!

ESV Exodus 32:12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people.

NIV Exodus 32:12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:12 Take heed lest at any time the Egyptians speak, saying, With evil intent he brought them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from off the earth; cease from thy wrathful anger, and be merciful to the sin of thy people,

ASV Exodus 32:12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying, For evil did he bring them forth, 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.

CSB Exodus 32:12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'He brought them out with an evil intent to kill them in the mountains and wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from Your great anger and relent concerning this disaster planned for Your people.

NKJ Exodus 32:12 "Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.

NRS Exodus 32:12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people.

YLT Exodus 32:12 why do the Egyptians speak, saying, For evil He brought them out to slay them among mountains, and to consume them from off the face of the ground? turn back from the heat of Thine anger, and repent of the evil against Thy people.

- **should:** Nu 14:13-16 De 9:28 32:26,27 Jos 7:9 Ps 74:18 79:9,10 Eze 20:9,14,22
- **Turn from:** De 13:17 Jos 7:26 Ezr 10:14 Ps 78:38 85:3
- **change:** Ex 32:14 Ge 6:6 De 32:36 Ps 90:13 106:45 Am 7:3,6 Jon 3:9 Zec 8:14
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES APPEALS TO YAHWEH'S REPUTATION

**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'?** - If God destroyed Israel after bringing them out, it would seem to the Egyptians that God's original intent was evil in that he delivered them simply to destroy them! So Moses appeals to God to vindicate His Own name. **NLT** = "Change your mind about this terrible disaster you have threatened against your people!"

**G Campbell Morgan** writes "'Undoubtedly Moses was filled with compassion for the people, but his chief concern was for the honor of the name of God."

**NET Note** - The question is rhetorical; it really forms an affirmation that is used here as a reason for the request. The word "evil" means any kind of life-threatening or fatal calamity. "Evil" is that which hinders life, interrupts life, causes pain to life, or destroys it. The Egyptians would conclude that such a God would have no good intent in taking his people to the desert if now he destroyed them. (On destroy) The form is a Piel infinitive construct from כָּלָה (kalah, "to complete, finish") but in this stem, "bring to an end, destroy." As a purpose infinitive this expresses what the Egyptians would have thought of God's motive.

**John Currid** makes an excellent point - the Egyptians would surely mock both God and Israel, saying that Yahweh had merely been toying with Israel and that his plan all along had not been to deliver them, but to destroy them. One of the principal purposes of the exodus and, in particular, the series of plagues, was so that the Egyptians might know who Yahweh was, his power, and his redeeming hand (see Ex 7:5; Ex 8:10; Ex 9:14). If God were now to destroy Israel, Egypt would be convinced of nothing! ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**Bush - Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, &c.** The prayer of Moses on this occasion contains a threefold plea; (1.) That God would not reflect upon his own wisdom by so soon destroying what he had employed so much power to preserve. (2.) That he would not give advantage to the Egyptians to glory over the ruin of a race whom they so much hated. (3.) That he would remember his covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The second of these arguments he prosecutes in the passage before us, and in doing so shows that he had the glory of God quite as much at heart as the welfare of Israel. Aware that the eyes and the tongues of Egypt and the surrounding nations were intent on finding matter of malicious triumph over a people so signally delivered from bondage, so miraculously sustained, so wondrously conducted, he would at all hazards preclude every ground and occasion upon which the divine glory could be blemished in the estimate of his enemies. Should the chosen people now after such illustrious displays of divine power in their behalf perish under the stroke of deserved wrath, what would be more natural than that fickleness or

impotence should be imputed to their covenant God, and thus his holy name be blasphemed on every side? All that had been thus far done would go for nothing, and to human appearance the Most High would 'disgrace the throne of his glory.' But this was a consequence which the pious heart of Moses could not endure to contemplate, and therefore is he so emphatic in urging the question, 'What will the Egyptians say?' Whatever petitions we offer to God, the glorifying his great name should ever be the grand prompting motive and the ultimate scope. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

Here is an interesting question -- What would have happened to Israel if Moses had not interceded? The answer is in Psalm 106:23 "Therefore He said that He would destroy them, **Had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach** ( "stood in the gap before him.") **before Him**, To turn away His wrath from destroying them."

**Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people** - Moses calls for God to stop (**turn** in Septuagint = pauomai in aorist imperative) from His "wrathful anger" (Lxx - tes orges tou thumou) Moses is not saying ignore their sins, but have mercy of them and ultimately he pleads for mercy on the basis of God's character ([Mercy](#)).

**Hamilton** points out that "Never in the Bible does God "repent" of sin, but he does "repent" of evil (that is, "evil" understood as judgment, calamity, or disaster).... Hebrews 4:16 urges us "to come boldly unto the throne of grace" (KJV), but is Ex 32:12b–c taking that truth a bit too far? I think not, if the pray-er is somebody like Moses. Only those who have stood for forty days and nights alone with a holy God, only those who are God's confidants, will pray at this depth and with this audacity. The rest, those closer to the margins of faith, will offer up more polite and orthodox prayers....Whenever God repents/changes his mind about an intended, announced course of future action, it is because (1) some person or persons have changed their behavior, either from bad to good (Jer. 18:8) or from good to bad (18:10). In Jer. 18:8 God moves from announced judgment to announced clemency. In Jer. 18:10 God moves from announced clemency to announced judgment. In at least two cases human repentance is expressed by a "turning from" (šûb min) evil, the same expression that Moses uses with God in Exod. 32:12. See Jer. 18:8; 26:3. (2) Or God may change his mind about something because party A has interceded before God for guilty party B (Exod. 32:12, 14; Amos 7:2–3, 5–6). I am aware of only one verse of the thirty-four listed earlier (see Grammatical and Lexical Notes) where God changes his mind without either human repentance or prophetic intercession, and that is 2 Sam. 24:16 (= 1 Chron. 21:15), for which NIV uses "was grieved." ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**NET Note** on **change Your mind (relent)** - The verb "repent, relent" when used of God is certainly an anthropomorphism. It ([naham/nacham](#)) expresses the deep pain that one would have over a situation. Earlier God repented that he had made humans (Gen 6:6). Here Moses is asking God to repent/relent over the judgment he was about to bring, meaning that he should be moved by such compassion that there would be no judgment like that. J. P. Hyatt observes that the Bible uses so many anthropomorphisms because the Israelites conceived of God as a dynamic and living person in a vital relationship with people, responding to their needs and attitudes and actions (Exodus [NCBC], 307). See H. V. D. Parunak, "A Semantic Survey of NHM," Bib 56 (1975): 512–32.

**Stuart** - This sort of appeal to God appears again, though not in exactly the same form or wording, in Num 14:13–19 (in connection with the rebellion in the wilderness) and in Deut 9:26–29 (a reminder of the present context). Abraham himself had appealed to God's character and past faithfulness in Gen 18:22–32 on behalf of the city of Sodom.

**Bush - Repent of this evil against thy people.** Heb. על הרעה לעמך al haraah le-ammeke, over the evil to thy people. Gr. ἐπί τῃ κακίᾳ τοῦ λαοῦ σου, upon the evil of the people. The original doubtless implies both the evil of crime committed by the people, and the evil of punishment suffered, or about to be suffered, by them. The latter idea of the two was so prominent in the mind of the Chaldean translator that he has rendered it, 'Repent of the evil which thou purposedst to do unto thy people.' This of course is spoken after the manner of men on the principles explained in the Note on Gen. 6:6. The simple meaning is, 'Relent from inflicting this threatened evil.' ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Change mind** (05162)([naham/nacham](#)) is a verb which means to be sorry, to pity, to console oneself, repent, regret, comfort, be comforted. According to the TWOT **nacham** reflects the idea of "breathing deeply" and hence refers to the physical display of one's feelings, such as sorrow, or in this case compassion or comfort. The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) uses the adjective [hileos](#) (with verb "be" = "be merciful) which means to be favorably disposed to someone "with the implication of overcoming obstacles that are unfavorable to a relationship" (BDAG). The writer of Hebrews quotes the Septuagint translation of Jeremiah 31:34+ which uses [hileos](#) in the context of the nation of Israel quoting God Himself Who declares "FOR I WILL BE **MERCIFUL** ([hileos](#)) TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE." (Hebrews 8:12+)

Exodus 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.'"**

NET Exodus 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel your servants, to whom you swore by yourself and told them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken about I will give to your descendants, and they will inherit it forever.'"

NLT Exodus 32:13 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You bound yourself with an oath to them, saying, 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven. And I will give them all of this land that I have promised to your descendants, and they will possess it forever.' "

ESV Exodus 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

NIV Exodus 32:13 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.' "

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:13 remembering Abraam and Isaac and Jacob thy servants, to whom thou hast sworn by thyself, and hast spoken to them, saying, I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of heaven for multitude, and all this land which thou spokedst of to give to them, so that they shall possess it for ever.

ASV Exodus 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.

CSB Exodus 32:13 Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel-- You swore to them by Your very self and declared, 'I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and will give your offspring all this land that I have promised, and they will inherit it forever.'"

NKJ Exodus 32:13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

NRS Exodus 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

YLT Exodus 32:13 'Be mindful of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou hast sworn by Thyself, and unto whom Thou speakest: I multiply your seed as stars of the heavens, and all this land, as I have said, I give to your seed, and they have inherited to the age;'

- **Remember:** Lev 26:42 De 7:8 Dt 9:27 Lu 1:54,55
- **to whom:** Ge 22:16 26:3,4 Heb 6:13
- **I will multiply:** Ge 12:2,7 13:15,16 15:5,7,18 26:4 28:13,14 35:11,12 48:16
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MOSES APPEALS TO THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT**

**Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself**(cf Ge 22:16), **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 repeats the essence of the Abrahamic Covenant in his appeal to God, especially God's unconditional promises of many descendants and the promised land forever. Saints frequently call on God to remember - see Deut. 9:27; Neh. 5:19; 6:14; 13:14, 29; Ps. 137:7.

Moses reiterates this appeal to the Abrahamic Covenant in Dt 9:27 'Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look at the stubbornness of this people or at their wickedness or their sin.'

**THOUGHT** - Moses gives all of us a good pattern of prayer. How often do we pray the actual Word of God to God? This is another reason we do well to [memorize Scripture](#), so that when we pray, the Holy Spirit can bring

the Holy Words to our mind. Old John Trapp says it this way “In the want of other rhetoric, let Christians in their prayers urge with repetition. Lord, Thou hast promised, Thou hast promised. Put the promises into suit, and you have anything. God cannot deny Himself. (see 1 John 5:14-15+)”

**Stuart on swore by Yourself**, - God is described as swearing by himself (“you swore by your own self”), a way of saying that he formally, solemnly gave his promise to create and maintain Abraham’s descendants as a great people. Humans swear by something greater than themselves; God swore by himself because there was nothing greater.

**Victor Hamilton on swore by Yourself** - See also Isa. 45:23; Jer. 22:5; 49:13; 51:14; Amos 6:8; Heb. 6:13 (“Since there was no one greater to swear by, he swore by himself”). Mortals can say, “I promise ..., so help me, God.” Only the Lord God can say, “I promise, so help me, I.” The Lord can also swear by his right hand and arm (Isa. 62:8), by his name (Jer. 44:26), by his holiness (Ps. 89:35; Amos 4:2), and by his faithfulness (Ps. 89:49). ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Guzik** says it this way - Moses appealed to God on the basis of His goodness. “LORD, keep Your promises. You are a good God who is always faithful. Don’t break Your promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.” ([Exodus 32 Commentary](#))

**Bush - Remember Abraham, Isaac, &c.** This was doubtless the great argument of all, the promise made to the fathers. To the fulfilment of this promise the veracity of God would have been pledged, had it been given simply in the form of a plain declaration; but there was more than this; it was a promise confirmed by an oath, and an oath sworn by himself, than whom he could swear by no greater. Consequently nothing could be conceived more binding by which the honor of divine truth could be engaged to the performance of its stipulations. It is as if he had said, ‘Lord, if thy people be now destroyed, shall not thy promise fail for evermore? And shall their unbelief be allowed to make thy truth of none effect? God forbid.’ ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

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

Victor Hamilton - And the LORD rescinded the evil about which he had spoken to do to his people.

John Currid - So Yahweh had compassion regarding the harm which he had said he would do to his people.

NET Exodus 32:14 Then the LORD relented over the evil that he had said he would do to his people.

NLT Exodus 32:14 So the LORD **changed his mind** about the terrible disaster he had threatened to bring on his people.

ESV Exodus 32:14 And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

NIV Exodus 32:14 Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

KJV Exodus 32:14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

LXE (Lexham) Exodus 32:14 And so the Lord was favorably inclined to preserve his people.

ASV Exodus 32:14 And Jehovah repented of the evil which he said he would do unto his people.

CSB Exodus 32:14 So the LORD relented concerning the disaster He said He would bring on His people.

NKJ Exodus 32:14 So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

NRS Exodus 32:14 And the LORD **changed his mind** about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

YLT Exodus 32:14 and Jehovah repenteth of the evil which He hath spoken of doing to His people.

- De 32:26 2Sa 24:16 1Ch 21:15 Ps 106:45 Jer 18:8 26:13,19 Joel 2:13 Jonah 3:10 4:2
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JEHOVAH RELENTED

**So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people**- The psalmist explains Jehovah's "change of mind" declaring "And He remembered His covenant for their sake, and relented according to the greatness of His lovingkindness." (Ps 106:45) The verb **changed His mind** ([naham/nacham](#)) is translated in the Septuagint with [hilaskomai](#) which means to show kindness or compassion to one who does not deserve it (as in Lk 18:3+). And so the Lexham English translation of

the Septuagint has "so the Lord **was favorably inclined** to preserve his people." Note that God did not say He would do nothing, but just that He would not follow through on total destruction of Israel. He did in fact end up punishing them with a plague (Ex 32:34-35), so He clearly held them to some degree responsible for their sin.

**Currid** - Some translations (e.g., NASB) say that Yahweh **'changed his mind'**. But there is a theological problem with that rendering, since other Scriptures highlight the immutability of God. For example, 1 Samuel 15:29 states: 'And indeed the Glory of Israel will **not lie or change his mind** ([naham/nacham](#)), because he is not a man, that he should **change his mind** ([naham/nacham](#)).' The Hebrew verb used in our verse ([naham/nacham](#)) does not always mean to change one's mind, but can also mean 'to be moved to pity / to have compassion for others'. The fact of the matter is that judgement and wrath did come on the Hebrews because of their sin (see Ex 32:34–35). Yet the judgement was tempered by the mercy of God—a mercy that came because of the pleadings of the covenant mediator, Moses. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

This would be easy to misunderstand and to cause one to question the fact that God is [Immutable](#) or unchangeable.

**John MacArthur** helps understand what seems to be somewhat at odds with God's attribute of immutable writing that "Moses' appeal for God to change His mind, to relent, succeeded because God had only threatened judgment, not decreed it. **A divine intention is not an unchangeable divine decree.** Decrees or sworn declarations (cf. Ge 22:16–18; Ps 110:4) or categorical statements of not changing or relenting (cf. Jer 4:28; Eze 24:14; Zec 8:14, 15) are **unconditional** and bind the speaker to the stated course of action regardless of the circumstances or reactions of the listeners. **Intentions** retain a conditional element and do not necessarily bind the speaker to a stated course of action (cf. Jer 15:6; 18:8–10; 26:3, 13, 19; Joel 2:13; Jon 3:9, 10; 4:2)." (MSB-bolding added)

**Robert Chisholm** - The article then argues that if God has issued a **decree**, He will not change His mind or deviate from it. However, the majority of God's statements of intention are not **decrees**. And God can and often does deviate from such announcements. In these cases He "changes His mind" in the sense that He decides, at least for the time being, not to do what He had planned or announced as His intention. (See full article "[Does God 'Change His Mind'?](#)" Bibliotheca Sacra 152).

**Excerpt from Chisholm's article** - When God saw the Israelites worshipping the golden calf, He angrily announced to Moses His intention to destroy the people and raise up a new nation through Moses. "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" (Exod. 32:10). The form of the statement (imperative + jussive + cohortative + cohortative) indicates that it is not a decree, but an expression of God's frustration with His people. The implication is that Moses, if he did not leave God alone, might be able to persuade Him to change His mind. In fact this is exactly what happened (vv. 11-14). Moses appealed to God's reputation ("What will the Egyptians think?"), asked Him to relent from His stated course of action (v. 12), and reminded Him of His unconditional decree to the patriarchs (v. 13). Verse 14 states that God did indeed change His mind. Moses was able to succeed because God had only threatened judgment, not decreed it.

**Guzik** - God answered Moses' prayer. God was going to destroy the nation—all Moses had to do was leave God alone and let Him do it. But Moses did not leave God alone; he labored in intercession according to what He knew of the heart of God. In the King James Version this phrase is translated the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people...Based on this, some (ERRONEOUSLY) believe God sometimes needs to repent of evil, or that God changes His mind (SEE THE [BETTER TRANSLATIONS](#) ABOVE)...Moses' prayer did not change God, but it did change the standing of the people in God's sight—the people were now in a place of mercy, when before they were in a place of judgment. ([Exodus 32 Commentary](#))

**Alan Cole** helps us understand **the LORD changed His mind** writing "The meaning is not that God changed His mind; still less that He regretted something that He had intended to do. It means, in biblical language, that he now embarked on a different course of action from that already suggested as a possibility, owing to some new factor which is usually mentioned in the context. In the Bible, it is clear that God's promises and warnings are always conditional on man's response: this is most clearly set out in Ezekiel 33:13–16." We are not to think of Moses as altering God's purpose towards Israel by this prayer, but as carrying it out: Moses was never more like God than in such moments, for he shared God's mind and loving purpose. ([TOTC-Exodus](#))

**Bush - And the Lord repented, &c.** Heb וינחם יהוה va-yinnahem Yehovah. Greek λασθη ([hilaskomai](#)) κυριος, the Lord was propitiated; the same term which occurs in the prayer of the publican, Luke, 18:13, 'God, be merciful ([hilaskomai](#), be propitiated) to me a sinner;' i. e. by the intervention of a mediator. The publican therefore does not rely upon the absolute mercy of God irrespective of an atonement.—The suit of Moses prevails with Jehovah. He so redoubles and multiplies the obstacles which he would fain throw in the way of the execution of vengeance, that God virtually acknowledges himself overcome, and accordingly the Psalmist says, Ps. 106:23, 'He would have destroyed them had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach.' ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Exodus Volume 2](#) different source - [Volume 2](#))

**Changed His mind** (relented) (05162)([naham/nacham](#)) is a verb which means to be sorry, to pity, to console oneself, repent, regret, comfort, be comforted, to get revenge for oneself (Ge 27:42, Ezek 5:13). According to the TWOT **nacham** reflects the idea of "breathing deeply" and hence refers to the physical display of one's feelings, such as sorrow, or in this case compassion or comfort.

**NET NOTE** on [nacham](#) on Genesis 6:6 "The LORD was **sorry** (nacham)" - Or "was grieved"; "was sorry." In the Niphal stem the verb נִחַם (nakham) can carry one of four semantic meanings, depending on the context:

(1) "to experience emotional pain or weakness," "to feel regret," often concerning a past action (see Ex 13:17; Judg 21:6, 15; 1 Sam 15:11, 35; Job 42:6; Jer 31:19). In several of these texts כִּי (ki, "because") introduces the cause of the emotional sorrow.

(2) Another meaning is "to be comforted" or "to comfort oneself" (sometimes by taking vengeance). See Gen 24:67; 38:12; 2 Sam 13:39; Ps 77:3; Isa 1:24; Jer 31:15; Ezek 14:22; 31:16; 32:31. (This second category represents a polarization of category one.)

(3) The meaning "to relent from" or "to repudiate" a course of action which is already underway is also possible (see Jdg 2:18; 2 Sam 24:16 = 1 Chr 21:15; Ps 90:13; 106:45; Jer 8:6; 20:16; 42:10). (4) Finally, "to retract" (a statement) or "to relent or change one's mind concerning," "to deviate from" (a stated course of action) is possible (see Exod 32:12, 14; 1 Sam 15:29; Ps 110:4; Isa 57:6; Jer 4:28; 15:6; 18:8, 10; 26:3, 13, 19; Ezek 24:14; Joel 2:13–14; Am 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:9–10; 4:2; Zech 8:14).

See R. B. Chisholm, "[Does God 'Change His Mind'?](#)" BSac 152 (1995): 388 ([SEE ALSO ANOTHER ARTICLE BY CHISHOLM](#)). The first category applies here because the context speaks of God's grief and emotional pain (see the following statement in v. 6) as a result of a past action (his making humankind).

For a thorough study of the word נִחַם, see [H. Van Dyke Parunak, "A Semantic Survey of NHM," Bib 56 \(1975\): 512–32](#) - you can set up a free account to read it.

**John Currid** has a convicting application - The Westminster Confession of Faith (1645) lists eight primary duties of the office of pastor. It is quite significant that the first one deals with the issue of intercessory prayer: 'First, it belongs to his office, to pray for and with his flock, as the mouth of the people unto God, Acts 6:2, 3, 4 and 20:36, where preaching and prayer are joined as several parts of the same office. The office of the elder (that is, the pastor) is to pray for the sick, even in private, to which a blessing is especially promised; much more therefore ought he to perform this in the public execution of his office, as a part thereof.' There is no greater task for the pastor (and ruling elders) than to pray for his flock. Unfortunately there is an almost total lack of attention given to this subject by denominations, seminaries and individual churches. And many pastors seem to have made intercessory prayer supplemental rather than fundamental. It is no wonder that the rot of materialism and secularism is corrupting the church today. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**Guzik** - Some are frustrated because the Bible describes God's actions in human terms, but they really cannot be described in any other way. "I suppose that I need not say that this verse speaks after the manner of men. I do not know after what other manner we can speak. To speak of God after the manner of God, is reserved for God himself; and mortal men could not comprehend such speech. In this sense, the LORD often speaks, not according to the literal fact, but according to the appearance of things to us, in order that we may understand so far as the human can comprehend the divine." (Spurgeon) ([Exodus 32 Commentary](#))

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**Question:** [Does God change His mind?](#)

**Answer:** Malachi 3:6 declares, "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed." Similarly, James 1:17 tells us, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." Numbers 23:19 is clear: "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?" Based on these verses, no, God does not change. God is unchanging and unchangeable. He is also all-wise. So He cannot "change His mind" in the sense of realizing a mistake, backtracking, and trying a new tack.

How then do we explain verses that seem to say that God does change His mind? Verses such as Genesis 6:6, "The LORD was grieved that He had made man on the earth, and His heart was filled with pain." Also, Exodus 32:14 proclaims, "Then the LORD relented and did not bring on His people the disaster He had threatened." These verses speak of the Lord "repenting" or "relenting" of something and seem to contradict the doctrine of God's immutability.

Another passage that is often used to show that God changes His mind is the story of Jonah. Through His prophet, God had told Nineveh He would destroy the city in forty days (Jonah 3:4). However, Nineveh repented of their sin (verses 5–9). In response to the Assyrians' repentance, God relented: "He had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction He had threatened" (verse 10).

There are two important considerations involving the passages that say God changed His mind. First, we can say statements such as "the LORD was grieved that He had made man on the earth" (Genesis 6:6) are examples of anthropopathism (or anthropopatheia). Anthropopathism is a figure of speech in which the feelings or thought processes of finite humanity are ascribed to the infinite God. It's a way to help us understand God's work from a human perspective. In Genesis 6:6 specifically, we understand God's sorrow over man's sin. God obviously did not reverse His decision to create man. The fact that we are alive today is proof that God did not "change His mind" about the creation.

Second, we must make a distinction between conditional declarations of God and unconditional determinations of God. In other words, when God said, "I will destroy Nineveh in forty days," He was speaking conditionally upon the Assyrians' response. We know this because the Assyrians repented and God did not, in fact, mete out the judgment. God did not change His mind; rather, His message to Nineveh was a warning meant to provoke repentance, and His warning was successful.

An example of an unconditional declaration of God is the Lord's promise to David, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16). There is no qualification expressed or implied in this declaration. No matter what David did or did not do, the word of the Lord would come to pass.

God tells us of the cautionary nature of some of His declarations and the fact that He will act in accordance with our choices: "If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it. Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, 'This is what the Lord says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions'" (Jeremiah 18:7– 11). Note the conditional word if: "If that nation I warned repents [like Assyria in Jonah 3] . . . then I will relent." Conversely, God may tell a nation they will be blessed, but "if it does evil in my sight [like Israel in Micah 1] . . . then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do."

The bottom line is that God is entirely consistent. In His holiness, God was going to judge Nineveh. However, Nineveh repented and changed its ways. As a result, God, in His holiness, had mercy on Nineveh and spared them. This "change of mind" is entirely consistent with His character. His holiness did not waver one iota.

The fact that God changes His treatment of us in response to our choices has nothing to do with His character. In fact, because God does not change, He must treat the righteous differently from the unrighteous. If someone repents, God consistently forgives; if someone refuses to repent, God consistently judges. He is unchanging in His nature, His plan, and His being. He cannot one day be pleased with the contrite and the next day be angry with the contrite. That would show Him to be mutable and untrustworthy. For God to tell Nineveh, "I'm going to judge you," and then (after they repent) refuse to judge them may look like God changed His mind. In reality, God was simply staying true to His character. He loves mercy and forgives the penitent. "Has God forgotten to be merciful?" (Psalm 77:9). The answer is, no.

At one time we were all enemies of God due to our sin (Romans 8:7). God warned us of the wages of sin (Romans 6:23) in order to cause us to repent. When we repented and trusted Christ for salvation, God "changed His mind" about us, and now we are no longer enemies but His beloved children (John 1:12). As it would be contrary to God's character to not punish us had we continued in sin, so it would be contrary to His character to punish us after we repent. Does our change of heart mean that God changes? No, if anything, our salvation points to the fact that God does not change, because had He not saved us for the sake of Christ, He would have acted contrary to His character. (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

**Exodus 32:15 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.**

NET Exodus 32:15 Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hands. The tablets were written on both sides— they were written on the front and on the back.

NLT Exodus 32:15 Then Moses turned and went down the mountain. He held in his hands the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back.

ESV Exodus 32:15 Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written.

NIV Exodus 32:15 Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back.

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:15 And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tables of testimony were in his hands, tables of stone written on both their sides: they were written within and without.

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

CSB Exodus 32:15 Then Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides-- inscribed front and back.

NKJ Exodus 32:15 And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand. The tablets were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other they were written.

NRS Exodus 32:15 Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain, carrying the two tablets of the covenant in his hands, tablets that were written on both sides, written on the front and on the back.

YLT Exodus 32:15 And Moses turneth, and goeth down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony are in his hand, tables written on both their sides, on this and on that are they written;

- **turned:** Ex 24:18 De 9:15
- **the testimony:** Ex 16:34 40:20 De 5:22 Ps 19:7
- **written:** Rev 5:1
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**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** - This detail is described no where else in Scripture. Notice that in vv 15-16 there is an emphasis on **tablets**.

**Stuart** has an interesting comment - These two tablets were the most valuable material thing on earth at that time, as the reader is now informed clearly, so that later when Moses breaks them, the reader can appreciate the severity of the sin that would have caused him to do something so destructive to something so precious.

**Criswell** - The Ten Commandments were easily placed on both sides of two tablets small enough to fit in the ark (Dt. 10:1-5; 1 Ki 8:9; Heb 9:4). Moses had nothing whatsoever to do with originating these tablets. The Lord not only delivered the thoughts, but He did so by writing the words Himself upon the stones (Ex 24:12; 31:18; Deut. 4:13; 5:22; 9:9-11).

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## Blaming God Exodus 32:15-29

It's bad enough to blame our parents, peers, or circumstances for our sins, but it's much worse to blame God. I read about a person on a weight-loss program who bought some donuts. When asked why, he implied that it was God's fault, because He had opened up a parking place right in front of the bakery just as he was driving by.

In Exodus 32, we read how the high priest, Aaron, supervised the making of a golden image for worship. This resulted in the death of 3,000 Israelites and brought a terrible plague on the nation. Instead of repenting immediately and taking responsibility as the leader, Aaron first blamed the people, saying they had put such pressure on him that he had no choice. Then he went even further and lied. He said that all he did was throw the gold into the melting pot, and the image of a calf mysteriously appeared (Exodus 32:24).

Moses rejected Aaron's excuse. He confronted his brother with his sin and then prayed for him (Deuteronomy 9:20). We can be sure that the Israelites who acknowledged their guilt were forgiven. But God judged the sin, and many died.

When you do wrong, take the blame. Don't look for scapegoats. Most important, don't blame God. —Herbert Vander Lugt [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

My sin, O Lord, defies Your Word,  
It shames Your holy name;  
I will not make excuse for wrong—  
Christ's blood is all I claim.  
—D. De Haan

A good test of character: When you do wrong, do you accept the blame?

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

NET Exodus 32:16 Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

NLT Exodus 32:16 These tablets were God's work; the words on them were written by God himself.

ESV Exodus 32:16 The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

NIV Exodus 32:16 The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

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

LXE Exodus 32:16 And the tables were the work of God, and the writing the writing of God written on the tables.

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

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

NKJ Exodus 32:16 Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

NRS Exodus 32:16 The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tablets.

YLT Exodus 32:16 and the tables are the work of God, and the writing is the writing of God, graven on the tables.

- Ex 31:18 34:1,4 De 9:9-11,15 10:1 2Co 3:3,7 Heb 8:10
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**The tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets-** This is divine inspiration to the max - God's work and God's writing!

It is notable that in a sense God's writing the Law on tablets of stone, foreshadow the New Covenant where He writes the law on their hearts (Jer 31:33).

**Hamilton** has an interesting comment - The emphasis on the divine origin of these tablets may be to draw a subtle contrast between something God makes—two tablets—and something the Israelites under Aaron's supervision make, one golden calf (Moberly 1983: 53). Both will be destroyed, the tablets through smashing, and the calf through burning and grinding. ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

### **Exodus 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."**

NET Exodus 32:17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "It is the

sound of war in the camp!"

NLT Exodus 32:17 When Joshua heard the boisterous noise of the people shouting below them, he exclaimed to Moses, "It sounds like war in the camp!"

ESV Exodus 32:17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp."

NIV Exodus 32:17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, "There is the sound of war in the camp."

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:17 And Joshua having heard the voice of the people crying, says to Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.

ASV Exodus 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.

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

NKJ Exodus 32:17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp."

NRS Exodus 32:17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp."

YLT Exodus 32:17 And Joshua heareth the voice of the people in their shouting, and saith unto Moses, 'A noise of battle in the camp!'

- **Joshua:** Ex 17:9 24:13
- **they shouted:** Ex 32:18 Ezr 3:11-13 Ps 47:1
- There is a noise: Jos 6:5,10,16,20 Jud 15:14 1Sa 4:5,6 17:20,52 Job 39:25 Jer 51:14 Am 1:14 2:2
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **A WAR IN THE CAMP BUT A SPIRITUAL ONE!**

**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."** - Clearly Joshua had not been with Moses when God told him about Israel's rebellion. And for Joshua to think there was war indicates the intensity of the celebration (for Joshua knew the sound of war having battled the Amalekites). But yes, in a sense Joshua was right. There was **spiritual war** between light and darkness, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan, a spiritual war for men's hearts.

**Exodus 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."**

NET Exodus 32:18 Moses said, "It is not the sound of those who shout for victory, nor is it the sound of those who cry because they are overcome, but the sound of singing I hear."

NLT Exodus 32:18 But Moses replied, "No, it's not a shout of victory nor the wailing of defeat. I hear the sound of a celebration."

ESV Exodus 32:18 But he said, "It is not the sound of shouting for victory, or the sound of the cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear."

NIV Exodus 32:18 Moses replied: "It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear."

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:18 And Moses says, It is not the voice of them that begin the battle, nor the voice of them that begin the cry of defeat, but the voice of them that begin the banquet of wine do I hear.

ASV Exodus 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.

CSB Exodus 32:18 But Moses replied: It's not the sound of a victory cry and not the sound of a cry of defeat; I hear the sound of singing!

NKJ Exodus 32:18 But he said: "It is not the noise of the shout of victory, Nor the noise of the cry of defeat, But the sound of singing I hear."

NRS Exodus 32:18 But he said, "It is not the sound made by victors, or the sound made by losers; it is the sound of revelers that I hear."

YLT Exodus 32:18 and he saith, 'It is not the voice of the crying of might, nor is it the voice of the crying of weakness -- a voice of singing I am hearing.'

- **but** : Ex 15:1-18 Da 5:4,23
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### NEITHER THE CRY OF THE VICTOR OR THE VANQUISHED

**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** - Moses quickly corrects the younger Joshua's misinterpretation of the sound.

**Hamilton** points out that "How he identifies the noise depends on how one translates the last line of v. 18 (see the lengthy grammatical note above): "It is the sound of debauchery/an orgy I hear," or "it is the sound of music I hear," or "the sound I hear I cannot make out."" ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Alan Cole** - In Exodus 15:20 Miriam herself had led such a triumphal dance for YHWH. Here, however, in view of the bull-cult, there is probably an orgiastic undertone. Compare the verb 'break loose' in verse 25, which certainly covers morals as well as religion. Bad morals follow idolatry (Rom. 1:24, 25). ([TOTC-Exodus](#))

**John Calvin** remarks, 'This is introduced to inform us how intemperately the people raged in their insane worship of the calf, since their shouting was heard from afar. It is thus that the devil bewitches poor miserable men, so that dissolute licentiousness with them is pious ardour.'

**Exodus 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.

NET Exodus 32:19 When he approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses became extremely angry. He threw the tablets from his hands and broke them to pieces at the bottom of the mountain.

NLT Exodus 32:19 When they came near the camp, Moses saw the calf and the dancing, and he burned with anger. He threw the stone tablets to the ground, smashing them at the foot of the mountain.

ESV Exodus 32:19 And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

NIV Exodus 32:19 When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:19 And when he drew nigh to the camp, he sees the calf and the dances; and Moses being very angry cast the two tables out of his hands, and broke them to pieces under the mountain.

ASV Exodus 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.

CSB Exodus 32:19 As he approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses became enraged and threw the tablets out of his hands, smashing them at the base of the mountain.

NKJ Exodus 32:19 So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

NRS Exodus 32:19 As soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets from his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

YLT Exodus 32:19 And it cometh to pass, when he hath drawn near unto the camp, that he seeth the calf, and the dancing, and the anger of Moses burneth, and he casteth out of his hands the tables, and breaketh them under the mount;

- he saw: Ex 32:4-6 De 9:16,17
- the dancing: Ex 15:20 2Sa 6:14 La 5:15
- anger: Ex 32:11 Nu 12:3 Mt 5:22 Mk 3:5 10:14 Eph 4:26
- brake them: De 9:17 27:26 Jer 31:32 Zec 11:10,11,14
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SEEING STIRS SEETHING!

In Ex 32:11 Moses had asked "why does Your anger burn against Your people? (Ex 32:10)" But now, seeing turns to seething of his anger just like God's had burned. As Hamilton says "If such idol atry makes Moses's "nose turn red" (for this is what the Hebrew says), should it not also make the Lord's nose turn red?"

**It came about, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing-** If Moses saw the people, then surely they saw him. It is interesting that the last time we saw Israel singing and dancing was after the Red Sea deliverance by Jehovah (read Ex 15:20,21), but now they celebrate the same way but in honor of a golden calf as their god! Amazing apostasy!

**And Moses' anger burned** - Literally "and the anger of Moses burned hot." While Moses had been told of the rebellion, when he actually witnessed it he became very angry. It is one thing to hear about someone close to you sinning, but it is quite another thing catching in the very act of sinning.

**Guzik on Moses' anger** - Moses had to deal with anger through much of his life. In anger he killed an Egyptian (Exodus 2:11–12). In anger he broke the tablets written by the finger of God. In anger he beat the rock God commanded him to speak to (Numbers 20:10–11). This last display of anger kept Moses out of the Promised Land. ([Exodus 32 Commentary](#))

## BROKEN COVENANT BROKEN TABLETS!

**And he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain-** As anger often does, it brought action, in this case destruction of the decalogue on stone. It is very likely that the breaking of the covenant tablets symbolized Israel's breaking of the covenant (Ex 24:3). Some writers feels Moses was acting on instructions from God, but the text does not tell us.

**John Currid** - The act of smashing the tablets of the law is highly symbolic: because the Hebrews had shattered the covenant with Yahweh, Moses smashes the sign of the covenant before their very eyes! ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**Hamilton** makes an interesting comparison - The scene is reminiscent of another one in Scripture: 1 Sam. 15:1-35 (see Grottanetti 1999: 59). In both Exod. 32 and 1 Sam. 15 a large group of people is about to engage in an erroneous and sinful (ritual) action, a sin of commission in Exod. 32, a sin of omission in 1 Sam. 15. Second, both happen under the supervision of a vicarious leader, Aaron and Saul, who previously have been anointed by the prophets Moses and Samuel respectively. Third, the prophet is absent both times when the sinful activities transpire, but finds out about it when God discloses it to him. Fourth, the prophet angrily confronts the leader of the crowd about his actions. Fifth, both times the prophet destroys quite violently the object of sinful behavior (the calf and Agag). Sixth, Aaron blames the people, and Saul blames the soldiers, while both proclaim their own innocence. ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Exodus 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.**

NET Exodus 32:20 He took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire, ground it to powder, poured it out on the water, and made the Israelites drink it.

NLT Exodus 32:20 He took the calf they had made and burned it. Then he ground it into powder, threw it into the water, and forced the people to drink it.

ESV Exodus 32:20 He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.

NIV Exodus 32:20 And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it.

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:20 And having taken the calf which they made, he consumed it with fire, and ground it very small, and scattered it on the water, and made the children of Israel to drink it.

ASV Exodus 32:20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

CSB Exodus 32:20 Then he took the calf they had made, burned it up, and ground it to powder. He scattered the powder over the surface of the water and forced the Israelites to drink the water.

NKJ Exodus 32:20 Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it.

NRS Exodus 32:20 He took the calf that they had made, burned it with fire, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the Israelites drink it.

YLT Exodus 32:20 and he taketh the calf which they have made, and burneth it with fire, and grindeth until it is small, and scattereth on the face of the waters, and causeth the sons of Israel to drink.

- **took the calf:** De 7:5,25 9:21 2Ki 23:6,15
- **made the:** Pr 1:31 14:14
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MOSES BURNS, GRINDS AND SCATTERS THE IDOL IMAGE**

### **Related Passage:**

Deut 9:21 "I took your sinful thing, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that came down from the mountain.

COMMENT - Note in the re-telling, Moses does not speak of the drinking of pulverized idol in the water.

**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** - Note Moses called the calf "**your sinful thing**" in Dt 9:21. Notice that no one tries to stop Moses from destroying the "god!" Moses came down from Mt Sinai with the authority of a man who had been with God for 40 days and Israel did not try to deny it. In burning and grinding the calf, scattering the ashes on water and making the people drink it there was a strong symbolism showing Moses' repudiation of Israel's idolatry. Recall there were up to 2 million Israelites. Did they all have to drink? And another question is this the water that flows from the rock at Sinai/Horeb (Ex 17:6)?

**THOUGHT** - Is this not an attitude that God wants all His children to have concerning idols? Utter destruction is called for. No compromise! Half measures will not do. God wants no competing "suitors" either for His Wife Israel or His Bride the Church.

Regardless of how one interprets the burning, grinding, forced drinking, the fact is clear that these vivid actions by Moses in removing the idol would (or should) give the people an unforgettable picture of their **great sin** (v21).

Josiah one of the last kings (and actually the last good king) of Judah instituted a restoration in which he mimicked Moses' actions...

He brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD outside Jerusalem to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and ground it to dust, and threw its dust on the graves of the common people....15 Furthermore, the altar that was at Bethel and the high place which [Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin](#), (HE MADE NOT ONE BUT TWO GOLDEN CALVES - read 1 Ki 12:28 = "behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.") had made, even that altar and the high place he broke down. Then he demolished its stones, ground them to dust, and burned the Asherah. (2 Kings 23:6, 15)

**NET Note** is interesting - Pouring the ashes into the water running from the mountain in the brook (Deut 9:21) and making them drink it was a type of the bitter water test that tested the wife suspected of unfaithfulness. Here the reaction of the people who drank would indicate guilt or not (U. Cassuto, Exodus, 419).

**Walter Kaiser** - Not only were the stone tablets broken, symbolizing the breaking of God's covenant by the people, but Moses quickly broke up the calf and the festivities, bringing an end to the people's covenant with carnality. ([EBC-Ex](#))

**Hamilton** has a similar explanation - The closest parallel we have is Nu 5:11–31, in which the wife whom her husband suspects of adultery has to drink "bitter water" that will prove, by what it does or does not do to her body, her guilt or innocence (ED: THIS MAKES SENSE WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THAT JEHOVAH IS THE "HUSBAND" OF ISRAEL WHO HAS BEEN UNFAITHFUL!). In Ex 32:20 it is Moses's way of determining who the ringleaders in this idolatrous act are. Otherwise, how else would the Levites, later in the chapter, be able to identify and punish the culpable parties? But we do not know what the symptoms of guilt are as is the case in the ordeal of Num. 5. ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Alan Cole** - As Israel has in fact been unfaithful to YHWH, her heavenly 'husband', so the curse will indeed fall upon her (Ex 32:35; cf. Nu 5:27). ([TOTC-Exodus](#))

**ESV Study Note** - The significance of making the people drink the water is not explained. It may represent (1) a further step in the destruction and desecration of the idol to have the people digest and pass it; or (2) a step in the shaming of the Israelites for their folly in worshiping the calf; or (3) a type of test, something like the test for adultery in Num. 5:16–22, exposing degrees of guilt.

**Exodus 32:21** Then Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?"

NET Exodus 32:21 Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought on them so great a sin?"

NLT Exodus 32:21 Finally, he turned to Aaron and demanded, "What did these people do to you to make you bring such terrible sin upon them?"

ESV Exodus 32:21 And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?"

NIV Exodus 32:21 He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?"

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

LXE Exodus 32:21 And Moses said to Aaron, What has this people done to thee, that thou hast brought upon them a great sin?

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

CSB Exodus 32:21 Then Moses asked Aaron, "What did these people do to you that you have led them into such a grave sin?"

NKJ Exodus 32:21 And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?"

NRS Exodus 32:21 Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?"

YLT Exodus 32:21 And Moses saith unto Aaron, 'What hath this people done to thee, that thou hast brought in

upon it a great sin?'

- Ge 20:9 26:10 De 13:6-8 1Sa 26:19 Jos 7:19-26 1Ki 14:16 21:22 2Ki 21:9-11
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## AARON BRINGS GREAT SIN

Who can fully understand the ways of the LORD? Here Aaron leads the nation into **great sin** and later when he is consecrated as High Priest, he goes into the Holy of holies to offer atonement for the sins of the nation which they committed the previous year! (Lev 16:17+)

**Then Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?"** - Recall that Moses had left Aaron (and Hur) in charge and now he holds Aaron responsible saying he had **brought such great sin upon** Israel. Moses' question indicates that he recognizes that Aaron was not the initiator, even though he did turn into a facilitator and was guilty of committing a serious sin against God.

**THOUGHT** - Leaders who fail to lead in the way of righteousness can do untold damage on the sheep entrusted to their care!

**Great sin** - Used 5x in 5v all in the OT - Gen. 20:9 (refers to adultery); Exod. 32:21; Exod. 32:30; Exod. 32:31; 2 Ki. 17:21. Notice the last 4 identify the **great sin** with idolatry!

When He had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD and made them commit a **great sin**. (2 Ki. 17:21)

**Comment** - Every sin against God is in a sense "great" for it will take a person to eternal separation from God if not covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. So while all sin is bad, here God says that this is **great sin**, which implies that in some way it is not just a "routine" sin (whatever that is). So why is it great sin? One thought is that it has greater consequences and certainly that proved true in Israel's case, for the great sin of idolatry resulted in the defeat and exile of the entire nation of Israel, the northern 10 tribes in 722 BC (by the Assyrians) and the southern 2 tribes (Judah and Benjamin) in 586 BC (by the Babylonians). Whatever the explanation of great sin, clearly it behooves us to diligently seek to fight against our flesh's tendency to make and worship idols (which will drive us away from following the LORD - cf 2 Ki 17:21), which was the **great sin** of Israel in the Old Testament!

**Currid** comments on **great sin** - This term appears in the Old Testament most often in reference to idolatry. However, it is also used of adultery (Gen. 20:9; 39:9). In the ancient Near East it is a legal term for adultery. When it comes to the worship of Yahweh in the Old Testament, these two terms, idolatry and adultery, are closely related; they are two sides of the same coin. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

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

NET Exodus 32:22 Aaron said, "Do not let your anger burn hot, my lord; you know these people, that they tend to evil.

NLT Exodus 32:22 "Don't get so upset, my lord," Aaron replied. "You yourself know how evil these people are.

ESV Exodus 32:22 And Aaron said, "Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil.

NIV Exodus 32:22 "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil.

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

LXE Exodus 32:22 And Aaron said to Moses, Be not angry, my lord, for thou knowest the impetuosity of this people.

ASV Exodus 32:22 And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they

are set on evil.

CSB Exodus 32:22 "Don't be enraged, my lord," Aaron replied. "You yourself know that the people are intent on evil.

NKJ Exodus 32:22 So Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil.

NRS Exodus 32:22 And Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord burn hot; you know the people, that they are bent on evil.

YLT Exodus 32:22 and Aaron saith, 'Let not the anger of my lord burn; thou -- thou hast known the people that it is in evil;

- **you know the people yourself:** Ex 14:11 15:24 16:2-4,20,28 17:2-4 De 9:7,24
- **that they are:** De 31:27 1Sa 15:24 Ps 36:4 Pr 4:16
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## AARON BEGINS HIS WEAK EXCUSES

**Kaiser** summarized Aaron's four excuses - (1) "you know how prone these people are to evil" (Ex 32:22); (2) "they said to me" (Ex 32:23); and (3) "we don't know what has happened to [Moses]." The flimsiest excuse came last: (4) "out came this calf!" (Ex 32:24). ([EBC-Ex](#))

**Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord burn-** Aaron is appealing to Moses even calling him "lord" when he should have been appealing to Moses to appeal to the LORD for him and the people!

**You know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil-** NLT = "You yourself know how evil these people are." This is the ultimate "pass the buck." It's the people's fault! Of course, Moses knew that the people were in fact prone to evil, but that still did not give their spiritual leader Aaron a pass! Whereas Moses sought to restrain their evil tendency, Aaron actually encouraged an [abetted](#) their **great sin** (v21).

**Hamilton** - Aaron seems to suggest that Moses has forgotten that these very same people have already established a track record of grumbling, whining, and faultfinding. So why be shocked? ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

Mt Henry comments: [V21-29]. Never did any wise man make a more frivolous and foolish excuse than that of Aaron. We must never be drawn into sin by any thing man can say or do to us; for men can but tempt us to sin, they cannot force us. The approach of Moses turned the dancing into trembling. They were exposed to shame by their sin. The course Moses took to roll away this reproach, was, not by concealing the sin, or putting any false colour upon it, but by punishing it. The Levites were to slay the ringleaders in this wickedness; yet none were executed but those who openly stood forth. Those are marked for ruin who persist in sin: those who in the morning were shouting and dancing, before night were dying. Such sudden changes do the judgments of the Lord sometimes make with sinners that are secure and jovial in their sin.

**Exodus 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.'**

NET Exodus 32:23 They said to me, 'Make us gods that will go before us, for as for this fellow Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him.'

NLT Exodus 32:23 They said to me, 'Make us gods who will lead us. We don't know what happened to this fellow Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt.'

ESV Exodus 32:23 For they said to me, 'Make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'

NIV Exodus 32:23 They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.'

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:23 For they say to me, Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this man Moses, who brought us out of Egypt, we do not know what is become of him.

ASV Exodus 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 know not what is become of him.

CSB Exodus 32:23 They said to me, 'Make us a god who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt-- we don't know what has happened to him!'

NKJ Exodus 32:23 "For they said to me, 'Make us gods that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'

NRS Exodus 32:23 They said to me, 'Make us gods, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'

YLT Exodus 32:23 and they say to me, Make for us gods, who go before us, for this Moses -- the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt -- we have not known what hath happened to him;

- Ex 32:1-4,8
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**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' - Aaron goes on to explain Israel's rationale.**

**Exodus 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."**

NET Exodus 32:24 So I said to them, 'Whoever has gold, break it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out."

NLT Exodus 32:24 So I told them, 'Whoever has gold jewelry, take it off.' When they brought it to me, I simply threw it into the fire-- and out came this calf!"

ESV Exodus 32:24 So I said to them, 'Let any who have gold take it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."

NIV Exodus 32:24 So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:24 And I said to them, If any one has golden ornaments, take them off; and they gave them me, and I cast them into the fire, and there came out this calf.

ASV Exodus 32:24 And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off: so they gave it me; and I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

CSB Exodus 32:24 So I said to them, 'Whoever has gold, take it off,' and they gave it to me. When I threw it into the fire, out came this calf!"

NKJ Exodus 32:24 "And I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them break it off.' So they gave it to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out."

NRS Exodus 32:24 So I said to them, 'Whoever has gold, take it off'; so they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

YLT Exodus 32:24 and I say to them, Whoso hath gold, let them break it off, and they give to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf cometh out.'

- So they: Ex 32:4 Ge 3:12,13 Lu 10:29 Ro 3:10
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MIRACLE

**I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off** - Here Aaron begins to take some responsibility for this sin.

**So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf**- Notice that Moses does not even respond to this ludicrous excuse! This has to be one of the worst excuses for sin in the history of the world! In went the gold and out popped an idol! One commentator actually believes Aaron's story is factual! This is just another reason you need to be so very careful when using commentaries for Bible study (including the one you are reading!). That is why I continually exhort folks to learn how to do their own [inductive Bible study](#) -- it is amazing how much light your own study can shed on the commentaries!

In Dt 9:19-21 we read that "For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was wrathful against you in order to destroy you, but the LORD listened to me that time also. The LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him; so I also prayed for Aaron at the same time. I took your sinful thing, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that came down from the mountain. " Aaron's sin was so great that only the intercession of Moses saved his life.

**Guzik** - Aaron gave the classic "it just happened" excuse. But it didn't just happen. Aaron thought it out, melted the gold, molded it, and fashioned it carefully with an engraving tool (Exodus 32:4). ([Exodus 32 Commentary](#))

**Currid** - The absurdity of his remark lies not in the concept that a god could self-create, because that was a common idea in the ancient Near East, and in Egypt in particular. For example, the creator god Atum is pictured as materializing in this way:

Praise to you, Atum!

Praise to you, Kheprer, who created himself!

You became high in this your name High Ground.

You created yourself in this your name Kheprer.

It is common in the southern United States for prisoners to help in the building of prisons. That is ironic because every brick that they lay makes them more imprisoned, and every nail they hammer makes their escape more impossible. In a sense sin is like that—each sin committed makes it easier to perform more sin, sin upon sin. And so it was with Aaron. After breaking the first two commandments through idolatry, he now compounds it with lying, a smashing of the ninth commandment. And so his guilt and shame are that much greater. Is it not so with us? ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**Exodus 32:25 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--**

Modern Language Bible (Berkeley) When Moses saw that the people were **unrestrained**—for Aaron had allowed them to **cast off restraint** until their foes would deride them—

NET Exodus 32:25 Moses saw that the people were **running wild**, for Aaron had let them get completely **out of control**, causing derision from their enemies.

NLT Exodus 32:25 Moses saw that Aaron had let the people get completely **out of control**, much to the amusement of their enemies.

ESV Exodus 32:25 And when Moses saw that the people had **broken loose** (for Aaron had let them **break loose**, to the derision of their enemies),

NIV Exodus 32:25 Moses saw that the people were **running wild** and that Aaron had let them get **out of control** and so become a laughingstock to their enemies.

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

LXE Exodus 32:25 And when Moses saw that the people was scattered,-- for Aaron had scattered them so as to be a rejoicing to their enemies,--

ASV Exodus 32:25 And when Moses saw that the people were broken loose, (for Aaron had let them loose for a derision among their enemies,)

CSB Exodus 32:25 Moses saw that the people were out of control, for Aaron had let them get out of control, resulting in weakness before their enemies.

NKJ Exodus 32:25 Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies),

NRS Exodus 32:25 When Moses saw that the people were running wild (for Aaron had let them run wild, to the derision of their enemies),

YLT Exodus 32:25 And Moses seeth the people that it is unbridled, for Aaron hath made it unbridled for contempt among its withstanders,

- **out of control:** Ex 33:4-6 Ge 3:10 Isa 47:3 Ho 2:3 Mic 1:11 Rev 3:17,18 16:15
- **Aaron:** De 9:20 2Ch 28:19
- shame: Eze 16:63 Da 12:2 Ro 6:21
- their enemies: Heb. those that rose up against them
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SONS OF ISRAEL RUNNING WILD!

**Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control-** This is interesting because he had already dealt with the golden calf, but apparently the celebration was still going on and if not overtly sexual seems to be at least sensual! NJPS renders it: "Moses saw that the people were out of control—since Aaron had let them get out of control—so that they were a menace to any who might oppose them."

What is the "[key word](#)" in this verse? "**Out of control!**" Used twice. The same verb for **out of control** is used in Pr 29:18+ which says "Where there is no vision, the people **are unrestrained** ("run wild" = Berkeley Version), (THEY BECOME UNGOVERNABLE - DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR IN AMERICA CIRCA 2020?) But happy is he who keeps the law." **No vision** means no prophetic word from God and/or failure to give attention to the Word of God. So just as no Word of God results in people going wild, the absence of the prophet Moses resulted in the people going wild!

**THOUGHT** - Sound doctrine ("vision") that exalts God as Supreme (cp "King" in Jdg 21:25+) must not seek to tickle ears (2Ti 4:2+, 2Ti 4:3,4+) must be boldly and uncompromisingly proclaimed by God's appointed and anointed prophets from the pulpits (**and all Christ followers**)! Could this principle (*absence of sound doctrine/"running wild"*) have anything to do with the fact that the modern church in America seems to be having so little "salt" and "light" effect on a decaying, devolving culture which has in effect "**cast off all restraints**" (even "morals" have become "immoral!")?

**Out of control** (06544)(**para**) means to let go, to let loose, to unbind, show lack of restraint

**Hamilton** - The basic meaning of the verb is "let go, let alone, disregard." Six of the sixteen occurrences of the verb are in Proverbs: (1) Pr 1:25, "ignored advice"; (2) Pr 4:15, "avoid" the way of the wicked; (3) Pr 8:33, "ignore" instruction; (4) and (5) Pr 13:18 and Pr 15:32, "ignore" discipline; (6) Pr 29:18 (Niphal), "cast off restraint." In all these instances the verb carries the idea of (not) neglecting or brushing aside something. If the basic meaning of the verb is "let go," then with hair the verb means to loosen the hair, letting it grow "wild." From that nuance we move to the verb as conveying the derivative idea of wild, disruptive, unruly behavior in Exod. 32. Also, 2 Chron. 28:19 carries this nuance when it describes Ahaz as promoting wickedness (Hiphil) in Judah ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Gilbrant** - The Hebrew word **pāra'** means "to be loose." By extension, the term may be understood as "to let alone," "to release" or "to show lack of restraint." The general sense of the word is to loose something, and **pāra'** is occasionally used in reference to hair which hung loosely and uncut. For example, the priests were prohibited from letting their hair become unkempt (Lev. 10:6; 21:10). Also, in the community of Israel, a person infected by a disease was required to leave his hair disheveled as one of the observable indicators to others of his uncleanness (Lev. 13:45). Furthermore, loosening the hair of a woman accused of adultery was part of the priestly test of her fidelity (Num. 5:18).

Permitting an individual or group to get out of control is another aspect of "letting loose." For example, while Moses met with God on Mount Sinai, Aaron allowed the Israelites to run wild into pagan practices so that they became a "laughingstock to their enemies" (Exo. 32:25, NIV; cf. 2 Chr. 28:19). Proverbs 29:18 indicates a similar sense by stating, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law" (NIV).

Several times in Proverbs, *pāra'* denotes willful rejection of wise instruction which results in suffering such consequences as poverty and shame (Prov. 1:25; 8:33; 13:18; 15:32). Elsewhere, the wise man avoids a dangerous option such as the path of the wicked (Prov. 4:15). According to Pharaoh, the Hebrews in Egypt were exhorted by Moses and Aaron to discontinue the slave labor forced upon them (Exo. 5:4). Finally, the Lord will not ignore nor relent from punishing the wicked conduct of Israel (Ezek. 24:14). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

**NIDOTTE** - The basic sense of the word (**para**) may be seen in a variety of related nuances. Sometimes the word suggests the lifting of prior social restraint from people, as when Aaron allowed the Israelites to run wild in the absence of Moses (Ex 32:25; cf. 2 Chr 28:19 = "lack of restraint"). This is probably the sense of פָּרַע in Pr 29:18±: "*Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint.*" Sometimes the word refers to a willful ignoring of available instructions and thereby suffering the appropriate consequences (Pr 1:25; 8:33; 13:18; 15:32). **Para** can also refer to a wise avoidance of a dangerous alternative, such as the path of evildoers (Pr 4:15), or to influencing people to desist from some activity or action, as Moses and Aaron attempted to do with Israelite slave labor in Egypt (Ex 5:4). In Ezek 24:14 the word occurs in Yahweh's warning that he will not refrain from decisive action against rebellious behavior. The word is used 4x in reference to disheveled hair, perhaps caused by removal of the turban or headdress. So the priest dishevels (NIV, loosens) the hair of the woman undergoing moral examination (Nu 5:18). Disheveled hair is part of the assigned lot of the leper (Lev 13:45); it is prohibited for Aaron and his sons (Lev 10:6) and for priests (Lev 21:10)

**Para** - 14v - avoid(1), brought about a lack(1), control(1), draw the away(1), get out of control(1), go loose(1), lack of restraint(1), let(1), neglect(1), neglected(1), neglects(2), relent(1), uncover(2), uncovered(1), unrestrained(1). Exod. 5:4; Exod. 32:25; Lev. 10:6; Lev. 13:45; Lev. 21:10; Num. 5:18; 2 Chr. 28:19; Prov. 1:25; Prov. 4:15; Prov. 8:33; Prov. 13:18; Prov. 15:32; Prov. 29:18; Ezek. 24:14

**For** - This is a crucial term of explanation, in this case explaining why they are **out of control**. The blame fell squarely on the shoulders of Aaron!

**Aaron had let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies-** **ESV** has "Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies." **NIV** says "become a laughingstock to their enemies." **Derision** is used only here in the OT so it is difficult to arrive at an accurate definition. The Septuagint translates it with **epicharma** which means an object of malignant joy, malicious joy or secret joy (LSJM quotes one secular source as "condemned by"). The last two words of the verse read literally "for a whispering among those who rose up against them." **The foes would have mocked and derided them when they heard that they had abandoned the God who had led them out of Egypt** (S. R. Driver, Exodus, 354) (NET)

**THOUGHT** - Is this not what happens when Christian leaders are exposed for being involved in heinous (usually sexual) sins? The world sees the church as "out of control" and they laugh, deride and mock it and God's heart breaks! Holy lives are like bright beacons in our increasingly dying, darkening culture. Read 1 Peter 1:13-17±.

**Currid on derision** - The Hebrew word is a feminine noun that is found only here in this form. It does appear on two other occasions as a masculine noun (Job 4:12; 26:14), and there it means a 'whisper'. In that context the term perhaps reflects a type of muted suspicion. The Septuagint translates it as a 'secret joy'. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**Exodus 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.**

NET Exodus 32:26 So Moses stood at the entrance of the camp and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." All the Levites gathered around him,

NLT Exodus 32:26 So he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, "All of you who are on the LORD's side, come here and join me." And all the Levites gathered around him.

ESV Exodus 32:26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the LORD's side? Come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered around him.

NIV Exodus 32:26 So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him.

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:26 then stood Moses at the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come to me. Then all the sons of Levi came to him.

ASV Exodus 32:26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Whoso is on Jehovah's side, let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

CSB Exodus 32:26 And Moses stood at the camp's entrance and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." And all the Levites gathered around him.

NKJ Exodus 32:26 then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, "Whoever is on the LORD'S side- - come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.

NRS Exodus 32:26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Who is on the LORD's side? Come to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered around him.

YLT Exodus 32:26 and Moses standeth in the gate of the camp, and saith, 'Who is for Jehovah? -- unto me!' and all the sons of Levi are gathered unto him;

- Who is on: Jos 5:13 2Sa 20:11 2Ki 9:32 Mt 12:30
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MOSES DRAWS A "LINE IN THE SAND"**

**then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me** - The reference to the **gate** is uncertain for camps usually did not have gates but it in some way describes the central hub of tribal activities. Notice Moses did not say "Whoever is for me," but "for the LORD." He is calling for separation which reminds me of Paul's words to believers in 2 Cor 6:17 (cf Rev 18:4).

**Currid on gate** - In antiquity the area around the gate was the most important part of a town because it was there that much of the social, economic and political business of the people was transacted. There Moses speaks to the people, and he gets to the very heart of the issue ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

This same theme is echoed in other passages...

(Josh 24:14-15) Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, **choose for yourselves today whom you will serve**: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

(1 Kings 18:21) Elijah came near to all the people and said, '**How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him**;but if Baal, follow him.'" But the people did not answer him a word. (ED: THANK GOD, THE LEVITES DID RESPOND TO MOSES' COMMAND!)

(Mt 6:24+) "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

**Currid** comments that "It is a serious cause for concern that many in the church today continue to waver between Christ and the world—but man cannot serve two masters." ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**NET Note** on **come to me** - S. R. Driver suggests that the command was tersely put: "*Who is for Yahweh? To me!*" (Exodus, 354).

**And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him** - God always has a remnant of righteous.

**Kaiser** points out that the "**All** in "all the Levites" is undoubtedly a generalization, since Deuteronomy 33:9 (ED: NOT SURE KAISER MEANT THIS REFERENCE AS IT DOES NOT MAKE GOOD SENSE TO ME = COMPARE CONTEXT Dt 33:8NLT) implies that some of the Levites also were slain in the action that followed (v.28). ([EBC-Ex](#))

**MacArthur** - Only the tribe of Levi responded to the call to take action in response to this situation which demanded judgment be inflicted. They had understood that neutrality could not exist in the open confrontation between good and evil. Family and national ties were superseded by submission to the Lord to do His will, which in this situation was to wield the sword of God's judgment to preserve His honor and glory. (MSB)

**Exodus 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.'"**

NET Exodus 32:27 and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Each man fasten his sword on his side, and go back and forth from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and each one kill his brother, his friend, and his neighbor.'"

NLT Exodus 32:27 Moses told them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Each of you, take your swords and go back and forth from one end of the camp to the other. Kill everyone-- even your brothers, friends, and neighbors."

ESV Exodus 32:27 And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.'"

NIV Exodus 32:27 Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.' "

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:27 And he says to them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every one his sword on his thigh, and go through and return from gate to gate through the camp, and slay every one his brother, and every one his neighbour, and every one him that is nearest to him.

ASV Exodus 32:27 And he said unto them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.

CSB Exodus 32:27 He told them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says, 'Every man fasten his sword to his side; go back and forth through the camp from entrance to entrance, and each of you kill his brother, his friend, and his neighbor.'"

NKJ Exodus 32:27 And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'"

NRS Exodus 32:27 He said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Put your sword on your side, each of you! Go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill your brother, your friend, and your neighbor.'"

YLT Exodus 32:27 and he saith to them, 'Thus said Jehovah, God of Israel, Put each his sword by his thigh, pass over and turn back from gate to gate through the camp, and slay each his brother, and each his friend, and each his relation.'

- **kill every man:** Ex 32:26,29 Nu 25:5,7-12 De 33:8,9 Lu 14:26 2Co 5:16
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **DIVINE PUNISHMENT FOR IDOLATRY**

**He said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel-** Moses issues the order invoking the "divine formula" thus says Yahweh, but the order comes from "Headquarters!" In other words when Moses used the "divine formula" he was saying in essence that these are the words of God which are being spoken! And so the following orders are from the Throne of Heaven and not from Moses (per se) on the earth. They were "through" Moses but not "from" Moses. Moses unhesitatingly exercises full authority in the Name of Yahweh.

'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** - Here again is the mention of **gates**, but the meaning is not clear, but it would imply the area where most interactions/transactions took place among the 12 tribes.

1 Corinthians 10:7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY."

**NET Note** - The phrases have "and kill a man his brother, and a man his companion, and a man his neighbor." The instructions were probably intended to mean that they should kill leaders they knew to be guilty because they had been seen or because they failed the water test—whoever they were.

**Gotquestions** - Moses called for those who were on the Lord's side to come stand with him (Exodus 32:26). The Levites stood with him and were commanded to go through the camp and kill anyone who persisted in the idolatry. Three thousand men were killed that day. The next day, Moses went up and confessed the people's sins before God, asking for His forgiveness. God declared that the guilty ones would yet pay with their own deaths and be blotted out of His book. **These were the same ones who, on the verge of entering the Promised Land, would deny God's promises and be sent into the wilderness to die for their sins.** Their children would be the ones to receive God's promised blessings. ([Episode of the Golden Calf](#))

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

NET Exodus 32:28 The Levites did what Moses ordered, and that day about three thousand men of the people died.

NLT Exodus 32:28 The Levites obeyed Moses' command, and about 3,000 people died that day.

ESV Exodus 32:28 And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell.

NIV Exodus 32:28 The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died.

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:28 And the sons of Levi did as Moses spoke to them, and there fell of the people in that day to the number of three thousand men.

ASV Exodus 32:28 And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

CSB Exodus 32:28 The Levites did as Moses commanded, and about 3,000 men fell dead that day among the people.

NKJ Exodus 32:28 So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.

NRS Exodus 32:28 The sons of Levi did as Moses commanded, and about three thousand of the people fell on that day.

YLT Exodus 32:28 And the sons of Levi do according to the word of Moses, and there fall of the people on that day about three thousand men,

- **sons:** De 33:9 Mal 2:4-6
- **fell:** Nu 16:32-35,41 1Co 10:8 Heb 2:2,3
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## LEVITES BECOME EXECUTIONERS

**So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed** - Recall Moses and Aaron are Levites (Ex 2:1-10). The Levites clearly accepted the authority of Moses.

**and about three thousand men of the people fell that day** - 3000 out of two million and most commentators feel these were the main leaders of the wickedness, so these rebels had to be removed immediately. It is notable that the Hebrew word (ish) is specially males, confirmed by the Septuagint (aner) which means man or husband. Does this imply the men were the primary perpetrators of this **great sin**? That is certainly a possibility.

**THOUGHT** - We "men" need to be careful how we walk, and especially careful how we lead because our wives and children are watching and will (generally but not always) follow into good or into bad! Dear brother in Christ -- where are you walking? Are you walking worthy of the Lord? Or are you have a "secret" walk that no one knows about (except God)? Be sure your sin will find you out and will many times have disastrous familial repercussions/consequences.

Be sure to distinguish what Paul says in 1 Cor 10:7 (which I quoted in the previous passage) from 1 Cor 10:8 where Paul mentions "23,000 fell in one day." 1 Cor 10:8 does not refer to the 3000 dead in Exodus 32 but is referring to the idolatry and immorality of Israel in Baal worship in Numbers 25:1-9.

**Kaiser** points out that "This was not the command of a prophet but of a holy God. Compare the demand for absolute holiness in Matthew 10:37 and Luke 14:26 (cf. 19:6). No small number of people had to pay the consequences for their stiff-neckedness (v.28; cf. Acts 2:41). Following God then as now sometimes requires denying one's family and being cut off from them (v.29; cf. Luke 12:51-53+; Lk 14:26+). A necessary part of consecration is being obedient to the Lord's command, which always results in his blessings (Ex 32:29). The Levites wholeheartedly followed God (Josh 14:8) and counted other ties of kinship as nothing in comparison (Deut 33:9), just as Phinehas was "as zealous as I am for my honor among them" (Num 25:11; cf. Ps 139:21)." ([EBC-Ex](#))

**THOUGHT - Gotquestions** on what we should learn from this episode - Their experiences are a lesson to us today. Even though we might justify our actions through reason or logic, if we are violating God's clear commands, we are sinning against Him, and He will hold us accountable for those sins. God is not to be worshiped with images, because any image we make will draw more attention to the work of our hands than the God who made all things. Also, there is no way we can ever fully represent the holiness and awesomeness of God through an image. To attempt to do so will always fall short. On top of this, God is a spirit (John 4:24), and we cannot form an image of a spirit. We worship God by believing His Word, obeying it, and declaring His greatness to others. ([Episode of the Golden Calf](#))

**Exodus 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."

NET Exodus 32:29 Moses said, "You have been consecrated today for the LORD, for each of you was against his son or against his brother, so he has given a blessing to you today."

NLT Exodus 32:29 Then Moses told the Levites, "Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the LORD, for you obeyed him even though it meant killing your own sons and brothers. Today you have earned a blessing."

ESV Exodus 32:29 And Moses said, "Today you have been ordained for the service of the LORD, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day."

NIV Exodus 32:29 Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the LORD today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day."

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:29 And Moses said to them, Ye have filled your hands this day to the Lord each one on his son or on his brother, so that blessing should be given to you.

ASV Exodus 32:29 And Moses said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to Jehovah, yea, every man against his son, and against his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

CSB Exodus 32:29 Afterward Moses said, "Today you have been dedicated to the LORD, since each man went against his son and his brother. Therefore you have brought a blessing on yourselves today."

NKJ Exodus 32:29 Then Moses said, "Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, that He may bestow on you

a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother."

NRS Exodus 32:29 Moses said, "Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the LORD, each one at the cost of a son or a brother, and so have brought a blessing on yourselves this day."

YLT Exodus 32:29 and Moses saith, 'Consecrate your hand to-day to Jehovah, for a man is against his son, and against his brother, so as to bring on you to-day a blessing.'

- **Moses:** Nu 25:11-13 De 13:6-11 33:9,10 1Sa 15:18-22 Pr 21:3 Joe 2:12-14 Zec 13:3 Mt 10:37
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DEDICATION IS DEMANDING

**Then Moses said, "Dedicate yourselves today to the LORD** - Hebrew literally reads "Your hand was filled." NIV says "You have been set apart to the LORD today."

**NET Note** - The phrase "fill your hands" is a familiar expression having to do with commissioning and devotion to a task that is earlier used in Ex 28:41+; Ex 29:9, 29, 33, 35+. This has usually been explained as a Qal imperative. S. R. Driver explains it "Fill your hand today," meaning, take a sacrifice to God and be installed in the priesthood (Exodus, 355). But it probably is a Piel perfect, meaning "they have filled your hands today," or, "your hand was filled today." This was an expression meant to say that they had been faithful to God even though it turned them against family and friends—but God would give them a blessing.

**Alan Ross** - One of the interpretations of verse 29 is that because the Levites sided with the LORD they were told, "fill your hand today to the LORD," i.e., provide yourself with sacrifices that you may be installed as priests. If this is taken as the meaning, then earlier priestly activities of Levites must be explained.

**Currid** does not favor Ross' interpretation writing "It has been suggested that the command to 'Fill your hand' means to present an offering to Yahweh on behalf of the Levites who did the killing at Sinai. However, the idiom, 'to fill the hand' has been used before in the book of Exodus, and, as we have seen, it refers to an act of consecration (see commentary on 28:41). Thus, apparently the order is given for some type of investiture ceremony to take place—perhaps it is at this point that the Levites are set apart to care for the holy objects of the tabernacle." ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**For every man has been against his son and against his brother--in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today-** The blessing of obedience. The obedience was costly as it meant taking the lives of fellow Israelites, but it was clearly commanded by God Who is perfectly just and Who determined this payment was just for those 3000 who were slain. Talk about counting the cost!

**Hamilton** - In retelling this in Deuteronomy, Moses leaves out all this messy stuff and simply states, **"At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister and to pronounce blessings in his name"** (Deut. 10:8). ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Criswell** - The holy zeal of the tribe of Levi was rewarded by their call to serve God at the sanctuary (Ex 38:21; Nu 1:50-53; 8:1-19; 1 Chr. 15:2; 23:24-32).

**Exodus 32:30 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."**

NET Exodus 32:30 The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a very serious sin, but now I will go up to the LORD— perhaps I can make atonement on behalf of your sin."

NLT Exodus 32:30 The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a terrible sin, but I will go back up to the LORD on the mountain. Perhaps I will be able to obtain forgiveness for your sin."

ESV Exodus 32:30 The next day Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

NIV Exodus 32:30 The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:30 And it came to pass after the morrow had begun, that Moses said to the people, Ye have sinned a great sin; and now I will go up to God, that I may make atonement for your sin.

ASV Exodus 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 Jehovah; peradventure I shall make atonement for your sin.

CSB Exodus 32:30 The following day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a grave sin. Now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I will be able to atone for your sin."

NKJ Exodus 32:30 Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

NRS Exodus 32:30 On the next day Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

YLT Exodus 32:30 And it cometh to pass, on the morrow, that Moses saith unto the people, 'Ye -- ye have sinned a great sin, and now I go up unto Jehovah, if so be I atone for your sin.'

- **You yourselves have:** Ex 32:31 1Sa 2:17 12:20,23 2Sa 12:9 2Ki 17:21 Lu 7:47 15:18
- **perhaps:** 2Sa 16:12 Am 5:15 Jon 3:9 2Ti 2:25
- **an atonement:** Ex 32:32 Nu 16:47 25:13 Job 42:7,8 Ro 9:3 Ga 3:13 Jas 5:16
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## IDOLATRY A GREAT SIN

**On the next day** - This would have been the day after 3000 were slaughtered. Can you imagine the conversations in the camp that night?!

**Moses said to the people, "You yourselves have committed a great sin"** - The literal reading is more emphatic "ye have sinned a great sin." The pronoun **you** here is the second person plural, which serves to sweep into this accusation the entire nation of Israel! "There is a communal liability." (Currid) Moses calls this a **great sin** three times (Ex 32:21, Ex 32:30, 31) In Ge 20:9 the term refers to **adultery**. Here (and in the only other use in 2 Ki 17:21) the term refers to **idolatry**, which is a form of **adultery**. Why? Because God was Israel's Husband (Isa 54:5, Jer 31:32+) and to worship another "god" was to commit adultery.

**And now I am going up to the LORD, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin**- Now watch the empathy and compassion of the man Moses. Yes he called their sin sin, in fact **great sin**, but he is not willing to leave them wallowing in their sin! He will seek to extirpate them from their sinful state before Jehovah. Notice the word **perhaps** which introduces a note of uncertainty about how God will respond and as we see God responds by saying "No!"

**Atonement** is **kapar** which means to make atonement, to make reconciliation (to reconcile), to purge, to make propitiation (to propitiate), to pacify, to cancel. Kapar is translated in the Septuagint with the verb is **exilaskomai** which is from the root **hilaskomai** which means to cause to be favorably inclined toward or favorably disposed toward another (as in Lk 18:13+).

**Hamilton on perhaps** - That he begins with "**Perhaps**" indicates that Moses has no idea whether God is open to this. Earlier in the chapter he is bold with God to the point of being brazen. Here he hedges his approach with possibility-only language. We cannot say, Gott wird mir verzeihen, das ist sein Beruf (attributed to the German writer Heinrich Heine [d. 1856] as he was on his deathbed, conversing with a priest), commonly translated into French as "Dieu me pardonnera, c'est son métier" ("God will forgive me; that's his job")....Yet Moses cannot make atonement for anybody. The priest, acting for God in God's name, can. Thus in Lev. 4 and 5, for example, the priest takes the blood of the sin and guilt offering and makes "atonement" for the offerer with the result that the offerer is "forgiven" (Lev. 4:20, 26, 31; 5:16, 18). There are so many similarities between Moses and Jesus, from birth to ministry, but at one crucial point the similarity breaks down. As Waltke (2007: 470) says, "But Moses unlike Christ cannot make atonement." ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Currid on I can make atonement** - This verb is a cohortative in Hebrew, a construction that expresses the strong will and desire of the speaker. In other words, Moses is determined to intercede for the Hebrews. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

Moses offered his own life as an atonement for the people (cf. Ro 9:1-3). No more plaintive or bold intercession of man for men is found in the pages of Scripture. God would not accept the blood of Moses, but He did accept the life of His only Son Jesus as an atonement (cf. 1 John 2:2+).

**Exodus 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.**

NET Exodus 32:31 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Alas, this people has committed a very serious sin, and they have made for themselves gods of gold.

NLT Exodus 32:31 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a terrible sin these people have committed. They have made gods of gold for themselves.

ESV Exodus 32:31 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold.

NIV Exodus 32:31 So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold.

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:31 And Moses returned to the Lord and said, I pray, O Lord, this people has sinned a great sin, and they have made for themselves golden gods.

ASV Exodus 32:31 And Moses returned unto Jehovah, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

CSB Exodus 32:31 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a grave sin; they have made a god of gold for themselves.

NKJ Exodus 32:31 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!

NRS Exodus 32:31 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Alas, this people has sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold.

YLT Exodus 32:31 And Moses turneth back unto Jehovah, and saith, 'Oh this people hath sinned a great sin, that they make to themselves a god of gold;

- **returned:** Ex 34:28 De 9:18,19
- **sin:** Ex 32:30 Ezr 9:6,7,15 Ne 9:33 Da 9:5,8,11
- **made:** Ex 20:4,23
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES BEGINS WITH CONFESSION

**Then Moses returned to the LORD** - Once again Moses the mediator treks up the mountain.

**And said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves** - God knew this. It seems to be in essence a confession by Moses for the people. He was certainly not guilty for he was not even present when the **great sin** (of idolatry) took place. Moses calls their sin what it is - great. He does not sugar coat the people's sin nor attempt to justify it.

**Alas** (0577)(**annah**) introduces a polite exclamation or request. Others say **annah** is a strong particle of petition in Hebrew (see Ge 50:17; Dan. 9:4). It is used in the context of humans making requests of God. In 11 of these cases, it is Yahweh who is being addressed. The exception is in Gen. 50:7, where Joseph requests pharaoh to allow him to bury his father in Canaan. In Egyptian society, pharaohs were considered divine. **Annah** is an "interjection of entreaty meaning I beg you, ah now, alas, or oh. The primary use of the word is to intensify the urgency of request or the gravity of a given situation. It is used to signify the pressing desire for forgiveness (Gen. 50:17); the great weight of sin (Ex. 32:31); earnestness in prayer of petition (2 Ki. 20:3; Neh. 1:5, Jon. 1:14)." (Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament)

**Annah** - 19x in 12v - alas(2), beg(1), beseech(7), earnestly pray(1), O(7), please(1). Gen. 50:17; Exod. 32:31; 2 Ki. 20:3; Neh. 1:5; Neh. 1:11; Ps. 116:4; Ps. 116:16; Ps. 118:25; Isa. 38:3; Dan. 9:4; Jon. 1:14; Jon. 4:2

## Stray Hearts

These people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! —Exodus 32:31

Today's Scripture: Exodus 32:21-35

Last fall, an expressway in my city was shut down for several hours because a cattle truck had overturned. The cattle had escaped and were roaming across the highway. Seeing this news story about stray cattle made me think of something I had recently studied in Exodus 32 about the people of God who strayed from Him.

In the divided kingdom of ancient Israel, King Jeroboam erected two golden calves for the people to worship (1 Kings 12:25-32). But the idea of worshiping hunks of gold had not originated with him. Even after escaping brutal slavery and having seen the Lord's power and glory mightily displayed, the Israelites had quickly allowed their hearts to stray from Him (Ex. 32). While Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the law from the Lord, his brother Aaron helped God's people stray by constructing an idol in the shape of a golden calf. The writer of Hebrews reminds us of God's anger over this idolatry and those who "go astray in their heart" (Heb. 3:10).

God knows that our hearts have a tendency to stray. His Word makes it clear that He is the Lord and that we are to worship "no other gods" (Ex. 20:2-6).

"The Lord is the great God, and the great King above all gods" (Ps. 95:3). He is the one true God! By: Cindy Hess Kasper [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seal it for Thy courts above.

—Robinson

As long as you want anything very much, especially more than you want God, it is an idol. —A. B. Simpson

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

NET Exodus 32:32 But now, if you will forgive their sin..., but if not, wipe me out from your book that you have written."

NLT Exodus 32:32 But now, if you will only forgive their sin-- but if not, erase my name from the record you have written!"

ESV Exodus 32:32 But now, if you will forgive their sin-- but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written."

NIV Exodus 32:32 But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:32 And now if thou wilt forgive their sin, forgive it; and if not, blot me out of thy book, which thou hast written.

ASV Exodus 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.

CSB Exodus 32:32 Now if You would only forgive their sin. But if not, please erase me from the book You have written."

NKJ Exodus 32:32 "Yet now, if You will forgive their sin-- but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."

NRS Exodus 32:32 But now, if you will only forgive their sin-- but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written."

YLT Exodus 32:32 and now, if Thou takest away their sin -- and if not -- blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.'

- if thou: Nu 14:19 Da 9:18,19 Am 7:2 Lu 23:34
- **blot me:** Ex 32:10 De 9:14 25:19 29:20 Ps 56:8 69:28 139:16 Eze 13:9 Da 12:1 Ro 9:3 Php 4:3 Rev 3:5 17:8 21:27 22:19
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MOSES SEEKS TO GIVE HIS LIFE FOR THE PEOPLE'S SIN**

**But now, if You will, forgive their sin--and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written-** Moses follows his confession (preceding passage) with a plea to Yahweh. Earlier Moses asked that the people not be destroyed and now he asks for their forgiveness. Moses' desire is commendable and amazing. But not man (other than the Man Christ Jesus, a better Mediator of a better covenant) can give his life for another. The psalmist writes " **No man can by any means redeem his brother Or give to God a ransom for him-- For the redemption of his soul is costly, And he should cease trying forever.**" (Ps 49:7,8)

**Currid** comments "As Childs says, 'But with God Moses is prepared to exchange his life for their forgiveness.' In other words, the prophet is offering his life as an atonement (32:30) on behalf of the people." ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**NET Note** on **blot** - The word "wipe" is a figure of speech indicating "remove me" (meaning he wants to die). The translation **blot** is traditional, but not very satisfactory, since it does not convey complete removal.

**Victor Hamilton** - Thus it appears that while Moses is eminently successful with his intercession recorded in Ex 32:11–13, he is not successful at all with his intercession recorded in Ex 32:31–32. To the first prayer, God says, "Yes!" To the second prayer, God says, "No!" He will *nāḥam* but not *nāšā'*. Israel will have continued existence, but not immediate expiation, at least not yet. ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** - Nothing more strongly marked the love of Moses for his people than his sincere willingness to offer up his own life rather than see them disinherited and destroyed. The book to which Moses referred, the psalmist entitled "the book of life" (Ps 69:28). Untimely or premature death would constitute being blotted out of the book. The Apostle Paul displayed a similar passionate devotion for his kinsmen (Ro 9:1–3). (BORROW [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**NET Note** on **Your book** - The **book** that is referred to here should not be interpreted as the NT "[book of life](#)" (**SEE THIS LINK WHICH DOES NOT AGREE WITH THE NET INTERPRETATION**) which is portrayed (figuratively) as a register of all the names of the saints who are redeemed and will inherit eternal life. Here it refers to the names of those who are living and serving in this life, whose names, it was imagined, were on the roster in the heavenly courts as belonging to the chosen. Moses would rather die than live if these people are not forgiven (S. R. Driver, Exodus, 356).

**Allen Ross** explains that "The reference to the "**book of life**" is not here the same idea as in the New Testament. (**BUT Tony Garland in his article NT "book of life" DOES NOT AGREE**) Here it is referring to the living, not eternal life. The LORD would destroy the guilty with death, but yields to Moses' appeal for a putting off of the punishment. The "book" is of course figurative, for God does not keep books-he is omniscient."

**Blot out** (wipe)([04229](#))([machah](#)) means to wipe, to wipe out and is often connected with divine judgment as with God wiping out all life in the flood (Ge 6:7, Ge 7:23); Amalek (Ex 17:14+), destroying Jerusalem (2 Ki 21:13); threatening to wipe out Israel's name (Dt. 9:14). Ps. 51:1 = "blot out my transgressions"; Ps. 51:9 = "blot out all my iniquities. " Ps 69:28 = " May they **be blotted out** of the book of life." The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **machah** here with the verb [exaleipho](#) means literally to completely wipe off. Literally *exaleipho* means to remove by wiping off, as when a blackboard is erased. The word was applied to the process of obliterating writing on any material. Some of the uses in Scripture retain this literal meaning but most uses speak of a figurative blotting out or wiping off. The idea in all the uses is to cause something to cease by obliterating or eliminating any evidence. Twice in the Revelation God promises He will **wipe away** every tear (*Exaleipho* is used only 5x in NT = Acts 3:19+; Col. 2:14+; Rev. 3:5+; Rev. 7:17+; Rev. 21:4+). A number of uses in both OT ([Septuagint](#)) and the NT use this verb to describe the blotting out or wiping away of sins. [Exaleipho](#) was used by Thucydides of whitewashing a wall.

### **Related Resources:**

- [New Testament "book of life"](#) - Lengthy discussion by Tony Garland emphasizing the meaning of the Book of Life as used in the Revelation

- [What is the Book of Life?](#) - Gotquestions.org
- [Is there a difference between the book of life and the Lamb's book of life?](#)- Gotquestions.org

**THOUGHT - Book of Life** is found 8x in the Bible, once in a psalm by David and most in the book of the Revelation - Ps. 69:28; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 17:8; Rev. 20:12; Rev. 20:15; Rev. 21:27

There are two interpretations of the the meaning of the Book of Life - As I have studied these writings, it seems the critical passage to understand in Psalm 69:28, because there is no question that all of the NT references refer to the same book, whether it is called the Lamb's book of life or just the "book of life." And the significance is that no name written in the NT uses of the "book of life" can be or will ever be erased. The NT use speaks clearly of the important doctrine of [eternal security](#) in Christ. That said, here is Psalm 69:28 "May they be blotted out of the book of life And may they not be recorded with the righteous." Now, a simple reading of David's words suggest that there is a book from which names can be blotted out. Moses' statement "**please blot me out from Your book which You have written**" would seem to support that a name in this particular book can be blotted out. But again from the NT we know that no name in the Book of Life can be blotted out. So what gives? Why does David ask God to blot names out of the **book of life**? David seems to be implying that names could be blotted out of the book of life to which he refers. Moses' plea to blot him out of the book would lead to a similar conclusion. So what is the answer? One answer to that that David's **book of life** is not the same as the **book of life** in the NT. Here is a quote from the [NET note](#) on Ex 32:32 says "The phrase the **scroll of the living** occurs only here in the OT. It pictures a scroll or census list containing the names of the citizens of a community. When an individual died, that person's name was removed from the list. So this curse is a very vivid way of asking that the enemies die. This curse pictures a scroll in which God records the names of his loyal followers. The psalmist makes the point that his enemies have no right to be included in this list of the godly." (See [John MacArthur's similar note](#)) The [NET Note](#) (and Dr MacArthur's comment) would tend to support the premise that the two books are different. Personally that is what I favor but will not be dogmatic. However I will be dogmatic about the fact that a person's name in the book of life in the NT signifies [eternal security](#) and **that is the most important take away** in my humble opinion.

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

NET Exodus 32:33 The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me— that person I will wipe out of my book.

NLT Exodus 32:33 But the LORD replied to Moses, "No, I will erase the name of everyone who has sinned against me.

ESV Exodus 32:33 But the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.

NIV Exodus 32:33 The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.

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

LXE Exodus 32:33 And the Lord said to Moses, If any one has sinned against me, I will blot them out of my book.

ASV Exodus 32:33 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

CSB Exodus 32:33 The LORD replied to Moses: "I will erase whoever has sinned against Me from My book.

NKJ Exodus 32:33 And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

NRS Exodus 32:33 But the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.

YLT Exodus 32:33 And Jehovah saith unto Moses, 'Whoso hath sinned against Me -- I blot him out of My book;

- **sinned:** Lev 23:30 Ps 69:28 Eze 18:4
- **my book:** Ps 109:13,14 Php 4:3 Rev 13:8 Rev 20:12

## GOD'S ANSWER TO THIS PRAYER IS "NO!"

**The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book-** God answered Moses prayer affirmatively to not destroy the entire nation, but now He refuses to say "Yes" to Moses' further intercession for these people. Jehovah would not accept Moses' offer of his being blotted out of the book, but instead says the sinners would be blotted out. In short, they would lose their lives. (See note on v33 regarding Book of Life). Notice the **whoever** which speaks of individuals who will be held responsible. Then in verse 34 the phrase **I will punish them for their sin** speaks of a collective liability.

Notice also the phrase **Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book** would imply that one who sins against Jehovah can be blotted out of His book (God calls it "My book.") This would seem support that this is not the same as the **book of life** in the NT because names cannot be removed from the book of life. But again I will avoid being dogmatic about one or two books of life!

**Kaiser** - Thus the OT principle is reaffirmed: the person who sins is accountable for his own sin (cf. Deut 24:16; Ezek 18:4, 13, 17). ([EBC-Ex](#))

**Currid** on the **book** - There are various types of heavenly books mentioned in the Old Testament. In Malachi 3:16, a document appears called the 'book of remembrances', in which are written the names and deeds of those who fear Yahweh. A second book or scroll with prophecies of blessings and curses is referred to a number of times (e.g., Zech. 5:1-5). And, finally, there is a book of life in which God inscribes the names of those who belong to him (Ps. 69:28). ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**Exodus 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."**

NET Exodus 32:34 So now go, lead the people to the place I have spoken to you about. See, my angel will go before you. But on the day that I punish, I will indeed punish them for their sin."

NLT Exodus 32:34 Now go, lead the people to the place I told you about. Look! My angel will lead the way before you. And when I come to call the people to account, I will certainly hold them responsible for their sins."

ESV Exodus 32:34 But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them."

NIV Exodus 32:34 Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin."

KJV Exodus 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.

LXE Exodus 32:34 And now go, descend, and lead this people into the place of which I spoke to thee: behold, my angel shall go before thy face; and in the day when I shall visit I will bring upon them their sin.

ASV Exodus 32:34 And 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.

CSB Exodus 32:34 Now go, lead the people to the place I told you about; see, My angel will go before you. But on the day I settle accounts, I will hold them accountable for their sin."

NKJ Exodus 32:34 "Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin."

NRS Exodus 32:34 But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; see, my angel shall go in front of you. Nevertheless, when the day comes for punishment, I will punish them for their sin."

YLT Exodus 32:34 and now, go, lead the people whithersoever I have spoken to thee of; lo, My messenger goeth before thee, and in the day of my charging -- then I have charged upon them their sin.'

- **my Angel:** Ex 23:20 33:2,14,15 Nu 20:16 Isa 63:9
- **the day:** Ex 20:5 Nu 14:27-30 De 32:35 Jer 5:9,29 Am 3:14 Mt 23:35 Ro 2:4-6
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**But** - Term of contrast. In contrast to attempting to atone for Israel's past sins, God wants Moses to move Israel out from Mount Sinai and toward the goal of the promised land.

**Go now, lead the people where I told you** - Note Jehovah calls Moses to **lead the people**. He was to **lead** them where He had told him, i.e., to the promised land of Canaan. In Ex 33:1+ Jehovah repeats the command to "depart, go up" and here He gives the specific destination - "**the land** of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ([Abrahamic Covenant](#)), saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.'"

**Lead** (05148)(*nachah*) means to lead, to guide, usually in the right direction or on the proper path. Conducting of one along the right path. We encounter this verb referring to God leading in ex 13:21 = "LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud ([Angel of the LORD](#)) by day to **lead** them on the way," In Neh 9:12 we see a parallel description "And with a pillar of cloud You **led** them by day, And with a pillar of fire by night To light for them the way In which they were to go." In Neh 9:19 = "You, in Your great compassion, Did not forsake them in the wilderness; The pillar of cloud did not leave them by day, To **guide** them on their way, Nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go. "

**Baker** - "The verb sometimes occurs with a human subject (Ex. 32:34; Ps. 60:9; 108:10); however, it usually appears with the Lord as the subject (Gen. 24:27; Ex. 13:17; 15:13). This term is also used metaphorically to represent spiritual guidance in righteousness (Ps. 5:8; 27:11; 139:24). This term also carries a connotation of treating kindly (Job 31:18); blessing (Ps. 23:3); deliverance (Ps. 31:3); protection (Ps. 61:2); or wisdom (Ps. 73:24)." ([Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament](#))

**Gilbrant** - Most frequently it is the Lord Who is "leading" or "guiding." For example, many of the Psalms contain prayers that ask the Lord for guidance. Psalm 23 proclaims, "He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." In the wilderness wanderings, God was in the pillar of fire and the cloud of smoke which led Israel (Exo. 13:21). Psalm 67:4 exhorts the nations to worship the Lord because He will one day judge and govern (i.e., "graciously lead"). Elsewhere, godly character and integrity serve to "guide" the upright throughout their lives (Prov. 11:3). The commandments of the Lord also serve to guide humans (Prov. 6:22). Job 31:18 speaks of "guiding" widows, that is, treating them with kindness and compassion. The imagery here is of shepherding, of leading them in a direction to aid them, rather than to take advantage of them. Figuratively speaking, Ps. 5:8 is a plea for guidance into righteous living. Occasionally, *nāchāh* may be understood as "to lead away as captive," "to herd away" to some set destination (Job 12:23; Ps. 107:30). ([Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary](#))

**Nachah** - 39x in 39v - brings(1), brought(1), guide(7), guided(6), guides(1), lead(14), leads(1), led(5), left(1), put(1), stationed(1). Gen. 24:27; Gen. 24:48; Ex 13:17; Ex 13:21; Ex 15:13; Ex 32:34; Num. 23:7; Deut. 32:12; 1 Sam. 22:4; 1 Ki. 10:26; 2 Ki. 18:11; Neh. 9:12; Neh. 9:19; Job 12:23; Job 31:18; Job 38:32; Ps. 5:8; Ps. 23:3; Ps. 27:11; Ps. 31:3; Ps. 43:3; Ps. 60:9; Ps. 61:2; Ps. 67:4; Ps. 73:24; Ps. 77:20; Ps. 78:14; Ps. 78:53; Ps. 78:72; Ps. 107:30; Ps. 108:10; Ps. 139:10; Ps. 139:24; Ps. 143:10; Prov. 6:22; Prov. 11:3; Prov. 18:16; Isa. 57:18; Isa. 58:11

**Behold, ([hinneh](#)) My angel shall go before you** - Who is **My angel**? I think this is the [Angel of the LORD](#) which refers to a Christophany. So while Moses was to **lead**, Jehovah's Angel would **go** in front giving Moses guidance. **Kaiser** adds "Whereas in the past the Lord had led (Ex 12:42, 51; 13:17; 15:13; 20:2) and Moses was only his servant, from then on Moses and an angel were to lead (v.34)."

**THOUGHT**- Follow the leader who follows the Angel was true then, and is still true today! Dear pastor, are you following the Angel?

**nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin**- This reads more literally in the 1901 ASV as 'nevertheless in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.' (See notes on [word study](#) below as to why "visit" is here translated "punish"). One might ask when was this delayed punishment meted out? While we cannot be dogmatic, the next 40 years of wilderness wandering would see all the first generation (all that participated in this golden calf sin) die in the desert and fail to enter the promised land. This would seem to qualify as punishing them for their sin. Sin has consequences and though the punishment may be delayed, it will one day be meted out, unless one places his or her faith in the Sin Bearer, the Messiah (1 Peter 2:24).

**NET Note** - The Law said that God would not clear the guilty. But here the punishment is postponed to some future date when he would revisit this matter. Others have taken the line to mean that whenever a reckoning was considered necessary, then this sin would be included (see B. Jacob, Exodus, 957). The repetition of the verb traditionally rendered "visit" in both clauses puts emphasis on the certainty—so "indeed."

**Punish** (visit) (06485)(**paqad**) conveys the root idea of something that is attended to or set in order -- fighting men under an officer (2 Chr. 17:14), priests in an order (1 Chr. 23:11; 24:19); arrangement of Tabernacle (Nu 4:16[2x]) "visit, turn one's thoughts/attention" to somebody. See Ge. 21:1KJV, "The LORD **visited** Sarah"; Exod. 4:31, the Lord **visited** (KJV; NIV, "was concerned about") his people in Egypt; 1 Sa 2:21, the Lord **visited** (KJV; NIV, "was gracious to") Hannah. But when the preposition 'al follows the verb, as here, it takes the meaning "**punish, count against, hold accountable for.**" Hence, in the second commandment the Lord "punishes" (pāqad 'al) the children for the sin of the fathers (Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9). "**A visit from God may be motivated either by his loving concern or by his jealous wrath.** God may turn his attention to us when we most need Him, or when He is the last individual we want around." (Hamilton)

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

NET Exodus 32:35 And the LORD sent a plague on the people because they had made the calf-- the one Aaron made.

NLT Exodus 32:35 Then the LORD sent a great plague upon the people because they had worshiped the calf Aaron had made.

ESV Exodus 32:35 Then the LORD sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made.

NIV Exodus 32:35 And the LORD struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.

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

LXE Exodus 32:35 And the Lord smote the people for the making the calf, which Aaron made.

ASV Exodus 32:35 And Jehovah smote the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

CSB Exodus 32:35 And the LORD inflicted a plague on the people for what they did with the calf Aaron had made.

NKJ Exodus 32:35 So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.

NRS Exodus 32:35 Then the LORD sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf-- the one that Aaron made.

YLT Exodus 32:35 And Jehovah plagueth the people, because they made the calf which Aaron made.

- Ex 32:25 2Sa 12:9,10 Mt 27:3-7 Ac 1:18 7:41
- Exodus 32 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WHEN IS THEN?

This is a very difficult verse to interpret. One writer says "For this archetypal sin of the Golden Calf, a free-floating prospect of further retribution would seem to hover over the people like a dark shadow." ([Alter](#))

**Then** - Normally **then** is a time phrase marking progression. But this **then** is an enigma. When is **then**? The context does not really disclose when **then** will occur.

**The LORD smote the people** ("the LORD sent a plague"), **because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made**- Note that the verb **they did** is the same verb as **had made**. As Currid reasons this repetition shows "that the two were co-conspirators in the golden calf incident and that they were equally responsible." ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

**Hamilton** on **smote** - Afflicted" (nāgap) is the verb Exod. 7:27 and 12:23, 27 use for the Lord's "afflicting/plaguing" Egypt. Does the verse refer to something that happens right there and then, or is it a prophetic word?...We started this chapter by suggesting that Exod. 32 is the account of Israel's "original sin" and fall from grace. If, as Christian theology maintains, the effects or fallout from Adam's sin extend far beyond Adam, then the effects or fallouts from the sin of the calf makers extend far beyond the calf makers. ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

**NET Note** - The verse is difficult because of the double reference to the making of the calf. The NJPS's translation tries to reconcile the two by reading "for what they did with the calf that Aaron had made." B. S. Childs (Exodus [OTL], 557) explains in some detail why this is not a good translation based on syntactical grounds; he opts for the conclusion that the last three words are a clumsy secondary addition. It seems preferable to take the view that both are true, Aaron is singled out for his obvious lead in the sin, but the people sinned by instigating the whole thing.

Most commentators have difficulty with this verse. **W. C. Kaiser** says the strict chronology is not always kept explaining "The order of events is probably not in strict chronological sequence; hence the plague may well be the slaughter of the three thousand mentioned in v.28. The plague came on the people because they caused the calf to be made or asked for it. Frequently in Scripture events may be directly attributed to people when they only occasioned them since the one could implicate the many as a member of a community, just as today one traitor could compromise a whole army or nation." ([EBC-Ex](#))

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