

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

Read **Exodus 32:1-6** – The Golden Calf

v.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.”

Moses was on the mountain a sum total of forty days, two days short of six weeks but the Israelites are impatient. As Clarke points out in his commentary the gathering of the material and the making of the golden calf would have taken some time, therefore this event probably took place within three to four weeks after Moses went up the mountain. A psalm remembering Israel sin records it this way:

Psalms 106:13-14 “THEY SOON FORGOT HIS WORKS; THEY DID NOT WAIT FOR HIS COUNSEL, BUT LUSTED EXCEEDINGLY IN THE WILDERNESS, AND TESTED GOD IN THE DESERT.”

They were like those who hear the gospel but are as Jesus described “STONEY GROUND”:

Matthew 13:6-7 “SOME FELL ON STONY PLACES, WHERE THEY DID NOT HAVE MUCH EARTH; AND THEY IMMEDIATELY SPRANG UP BECAUSE THEY HAD NO DEPTH OF EARTH. BUT WHEN THE SUN WAS UP THEY WERE SCORCHED, AND BECAUSE THEY HAD NO ROOT THEY WITHERED AWAY.”

Israel’s euphoria at being freed from slavery much like someone baptized and made free from sin. But it didn’t last. Moses had left Aaron in charge so they demanded that he get up from waiting for Moses and make them gods to lead them. They wanted gods that reflected their Egyptian association of recent times. God, who protected them from the fury of Pharaoh and his army, who gave them manna and meat to eat, who spoke to them from the mountain until they could bear no more, has been abandoned. Even after all that God had done in their presence their faith was so weak that they could not wait another day.

As Clarke points out in his comments, even their language is one of “contempt” for Moses and the laws that he has given them from God.

v.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.”

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

The amazing thing to me in this verse is the lack of any indication that Aaron resisted the demands of those who confronted him. He is the brother of Moses, he has not only seen the power of God manifested as they have but has experienced more of God's might through being with Moses in his confrontations with Pharaoh. It marks Aaron as weak and unable to stand up against those who oppose God. More about this later

We see the source of their jewelry in the record given just before they left Egypt.

Exodus 12:35-36 "NOW THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAD DONE ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF MOSES, AND THEY HAD ASKED FROM THE EGYPTIANS ARTICLES OF SILVER, ARTICLES OF GOLD, AND CLOTHING. AND THE **LORD** HAD GIVEN THE PEOPLE FAVOR IN THE SIGHT OF THE EGYPTIANS, SO THAT THEY GRANTED THEM *what they requested*. THUS THEY PLUNDERED THE EGYPTIANS."

v.3 "SO ALL THE PEOPLE BROKE OFF THE GOLDEN EARRINGS WHICH *were* IN THEIR EARS, AND BROUGHT *them* TO AARON."

v.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!"

While the commentators discuss the nature of how the calf was made, disputing over the Hebrew word "cheret" as to whether it means a mold, an engraving tool or something else their discussion seems frivolous in the face of the great sin that Aaron and Israel has committed. Aaron takes the earrings, melts the gold, molds a calf, a representation of one of the Egyptian gods, and further refines and shapes his work to make something artistically acceptable. The language in the last sentence would indicate that only a small number of the Israelite nation were actually causing this problem

Israel has violated the very commandments that Moses is carrying down the mountain written on tables of stone by the finger of God. God remembers. In the psalm that records and remembers the sins Israel committed in spite of God's love we find:

Psalms 106:19 "THEY MADE A CALF IN HOREB, AND WORSHIPED THE MOLDED IMAGE."

And again through Nehemiah:

Nehemiah 9:18 "EVEN WHEN THEY MADE A MOLDED CALF FOR THEMSELVES, AND SAID, 'THIS *is* YOUR GOD THAT BROUGHT YOU UP OUT OF EGYPT,' AND WORKED GREAT PROVOCATIONS,"

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

Their sin was so great that it was remembered again in the sermon by Stephen before the Sanhedrin:

Acts 7:41 “AND THEY MADE A CALF IN THOSE DAYS, OFFERED SACRIFICES TO THE IDOL, AND REJOICED IN THE WORKS OF THEIR OWN HANDS.”

v.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**.”

Aaron continues to lead the people in the way they want to go rather than in the way of God. This is the very thing that has caused so many of our brethren to condemn themselves in today's world. Their leaders, rather than standing up and discharging their God-given responsibilities to Him have chosen instead to give the people what they want.

Here he even builds an altar on which they will sacrifice and declared a feast to help them celebrate their apostasy against God. Whether he viewed the golden calf as a representation of Jehovah God we can't be sure but the word translated “LORD” at the end of the verse is the name for Jehovah God.

v.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.”

A feast day has been declared. What resources they used for their feast and their burnt offerings we're not told. It would be necessary that they slaughtered animals from their flocks and herds. Then they sat down to eat and rose up to play. This idol worship is remembered in two places in the New Testament. First of all by Stephen as we noted just in our discussion of the last verse, but also by the Apostle Paul as he quotes **Exodus 32:6** directly in **I Corinthians 10:7**.

I Corinthians 10:6-7 “NOW THESE THINGS BECAME OUR EXAMPLES, TO THE INTENT THAT WE SHOULD NOT LUST AFTER EVIL THINGS AS THEY ALSO LUSTED. AND DO NOT BECOME IDOLATERS AS *were* SOME OF THEM. AS IT IS WRITTEN, “*THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY.*”

Read **Exodus 32:7-14** – God's Anger Against Israel

v.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*.”

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

Moses is now facing an angry God. In the language used here he implies that he has disowned Israel. “YOUR PEOPLE”, he says, not “MY PEOPLE” but “YOUR PEOPLE”. They had broken the covenant that had been spoken to them but probably had not been recorded yet.

God declares this they had corrupted themselves, how so? Didn't Aaron proclaim their feast as a “FEAST UNTO THE LORD?” What is wrong here? They have abandoned the commandments of God, even though they call their feast a feast unto God, God isn't accepting it. He declares that they are worshiping a golden idol. Moses describes the words of God in more detail in:

Deuteronomy 9:12 “THEN THE LORD SAID TO ME, ‘ARISE, GO DOWN QUICKLY FROM HERE, FOR YOUR PEOPLE WHOM YOU BROUGHT OUT OF EGYPT HAVE ACTED CORRUPTLY; THEY HAVE QUICKLY TURNED ASIDE FROM THE WAY WHICH I COMMANDED THEM; THEY HAVE MADE THEMSELVES A MOLDED IMAGE.”

Adam Clarke takes delight in drawing a parallel between what Israel is doing here with the golden calf and what they Catholic denomination does with their statues of Mary, various saints, (many who were far from being saints in their worldly conduct) and Israel worship of the calf. Both create for themselves forms of worship and then try to convince the world and perhaps even themselves that their worship is directed toward God.

But then is Mr. Clarke any different in the Methodist Church that he claims to be a part of when they add instruments of music to their worship and teach the mental meanderings of John Calvin on a par with the word of God?

v.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!’”

“THEY HAVE TURNED ASIDE QUICKLY”, how long has it been since God spoke to Israel:

Exodus 20:3 “THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.”

And told Moses with Israel standing “AFAR OFF” but probably close enough that they could see and hear the words of God:

Exodus 20:23 “YOU SHALL NOT MAKE *anything to be* WITH ME—GODS OF SILVER OR GODS OF GOLD YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELVES.”

And

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

Exodus 22:20 "HE WHO SACRIFICES TO *any* GOD, EXCEPT TO THE LORD ONLY, HE SHALL BE UTTERLY DESTROYED."

Yet, they rebelled against the very God whose voice that they heard from the mountain. The voice that so terrified them that they begged Moses to speak to them for God rather than listen to God speak himself (**Exodus 20:18-19**).

v.9 "AND THE **LORD** SAID TO MOSES, "I HAVE SEEN THIS PEOPLE, AND INDEED IT *is* A STIFF-NECKED PEOPLE!"

"STIFF-NECKED", obstinate, bull-headed, defiant; there are various ways we can describe these people of Israel. Each of these ways depict a people who refused to bow their heads in humility before Jehovah God. They obeyed out of fear or repression when it was imperative they do so, but now when they wished to do otherwise and abandoned God. That sounds like a lot of folks today, offering God worship of their design, giving him lip-service and living worldly lives otherwise, teaching false doctrines, destroying the souls of millions, yet claiming to be faithful children of His. Even after seeing the northern kingdom totally destroyed, the southern king taken into captivity, then oppressed first by Syria and then Rome. Even after seeing the Messiah come, proving himself, his origin and his word by miracles that no man could do they killed him. The Stephen describes them this way:

Acts 7:51 "*You* STIFF-NECKED AND UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART AND EARS! YOU ALWAYS RESIST THE HOLY SPIRIT; AS YOUR FATHERS *did*, SO *do* YOU.

v.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."

Moses either had already begun to plead with God for Israel, or God, knowing his heart, knew that he would. God is deeply angry. The warning of the Hebrew writer comes to mind:

Hebrews 10:30-31 "FOR WE KNOW HIM WHO SAID, "*VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,*" SAYS THE LORD. AND AGAIN, "*THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE*". IT IS A FEARFUL THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD."

The italicized words are a direct quote from the "Song of Moses" **Deuteronomy 32:35-36**

God is so angry he is ready to wipe out the entire nation of Israel and start over with the same promises given to the descendants of Moses.

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

v.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?”

Moses continues to plead for Israel in spite of God’s warning. Most people don’t think of God as being a spirit that can express any emotion other than love. Perhaps one of the main reasons that we should study the Old Testament is to realize that God’s wrath is just as great as his love. Our Supreme Ruler will never do anything out of emotion as a man would, that would be against his nature. But at the same time when men have been warned of the penalties of disobedience, especially the kind of disobedience being flaunted here; they should expect to suffer the consequences of God’s anger.

Moses reminds God, as though that was needed, that He had brought them out of Egypt by force of his power over mankind. He had rescued them from slavery under the most powerful nation of the world at that time, displaying for all the world to see the power of an Almighty Hand.

v.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.”

Moses tells God, probably with some justification, that Egypt would sooth their hurt pride and humiliation at being humbled by Jehovah by claiming that He had just brought Israel out to the Wilderness to destroy them. Then he pleads once again that God temper his wrath and not harm His chosen people. Joshua uses similar language to inquire of God as to why Israel was driven from before Ai in defeat:

Joshua 7:9 “FOR THE CANAANITES AND ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND WILL HEAR *it*, AND SURROUND US, AND CUT OFF OUR NAME FROM THE EARTH. THEN WHAT WILL YOU DO FOR YOUR GREAT NAME?”

God had allowed Canaan to see that Israel could be defeated and that would place them in jeopardy as a nation. It would also put God’s power in question because he did protect his people for the consequences of their sin.

v.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.”

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Israel all three that their descendants would be as plentiful as the “STARS OF HEAVEN” and that “THIS LAND” would be their inheritance.

Genesis 13:14-15 “AND THE **LORD** SAID TO ABRAM, AFTER LOT HAD SEPARATED FROM HIM: “LIFT YOUR EYES NOW AND LOOK FROM THE PLACE WHERE YOU ARE—NORTHWARD, SOUTHWARD, EASTWARD, AND WESTWARD; FOR ALL THE LAND WHICH YOU SEE I GIVE TO YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS FOREVER.”

Genesis 15:5 “THEN HE BROUGHT HIM OUTSIDE AND SAID, “LOOK NOW TOWARD HEAVEN, AND COUNT THE STARS IF YOU ARE ABLE TO NUMBER THEM.” AND HE SAID TO HIM, “SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE.”

v.14 “SO THE **LORD** RELENTED FROM THE HARM WHICH HE SAID HE WOULD DO TO HIS PEOPLE.”

So Moses is successful in turning the wrath of God away from Israel.

Read **Exodus 32:15-24** – Moses’ Return to Camp

v.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.”

Moses, having turned God from his plan to destroy Israel, now turns and goes down the mountain to return to the camp. He is also carrying the stone tablets of the Law. He has persuaded God to harness his anger but the thought that went through my mind as I studied this is to never put something breakable in the hands of an angry man.

v.16 “NOW THE TABLETS **were** THE WORK OF GOD, AND THE WRITING **was** THE WRITING OF GOD ENGRAVED ON THE TABLETS.”

The record reminds us that these were the tablets or tables of stone that were the handiwork of God himself. We are also reminded that God is the source of all law, even moral law or the laws that mankind make and consider to be theirs. Under the New Testament Law of Christ we don't have Law written in stone but rather as the prophet recorded for our learning:

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

Jeremiah 31:33 “BUT THIS *is* THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE **LORD**: I WILL PUT MY LAW IN THEIR MINDS, AND WRITE IT ON THEIR HEARTS; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.”

And that the writer of the Hebrew letter quotes directly in:

Hebrews 8:10 “FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE **LORD**: I WILL PUT MY LAWS IN THEIR MIND AND WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.”

v.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.”

As Adam Clarke points out in his commentary, when Joshua hears the tumult taking place in the Israeli camp he makes a warrior’s assumption that it is the noise of battle.

v.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.”

This is Moses answer to Joshua’s comment. He knows what it is but only tells Joshua that it isn’t the shout of victory, nor the lament of defeat, but rather the sound of singing. I would suppose since they are worshipping the golden calf that perhaps it might even be singing in worship.

v.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.”

When Moses actually sees the people of Israel dancing and worshipping the calf he gets angry as well. Like we noted above don’t put anything breakable in the hands of an angry man. The tablets of stone that God had written His law upon just became fragments of stone and dust. In the judgment of Adam Clarke this was a rash and irreverent act and perhaps it was but righteous anger has a place in situations where bold and blatant sin exists.

v.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**.”

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

A lot of folks would consider this a rash act as well but it vividly expresses the anger of Moses against those who were carrying on in their idol worship. Moses shows this complete contempt for their sin. At this point the gold became a symbol, a symbol of Israel's sin.

Deuteronomy 9:21 "THEN I TOOK YOUR SIN, THE CALF WHICH YOU HAD MADE, AND BURNED IT WITH FIRE AND CRUSHED IT *and* GROUND *it* VERY SMALL, UNTIL IT WAS AS FINE AS DUST; AND I THREW ITS DUST INTO THE BROOK THAT DESCENDED FROM THE MOUNTAIN."

Moses ground the gold so fine that when thrown into the brook it floated.

v.21 "AND MOSES SAID TO AARON, "WHAT DID THIS PEOPLE DO TO YOU THAT YOU HAVE BROUGHT SO GREAT A SIN UPON THEM?"

In these verses we find a great lesson for the church of today. Then Moses turns his attention to Aaron. This is the man that God has just given Moses instructions to ordain as the spiritual leader of His chosen people. But he has allowed the people to lead him into apostasy and rebellion against God and His commandments.

He wants to know what got into Aaron to make him totally ignore God's commandments. Aaron here is the picture of many elders in the Lord's church today, weak kneed, working to serve the people's "felt needs" rather than the God that they have pledged to serve. It is reminiscent of the words of the Gentile king to Abraham because he didn't have the backbone to even stand up for his wife. He allowed the Philistine king to think that Sarah was his sister, not his wife.

Genesis 20:9 "AND ABIMELECH CALLED ABRAHAM AND SAID TO HIM, "WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO US? HOW HAVE I OFFENDED YOU, THAT YOU HAVE BROUGHT ON ME AND ON MY KINGDOM A GREAT SIN? YOU HAVE DONE DEEDS TO ME THAT OUGHT NOT TO BE DONE."

v.22 "SO AARON SAID, "DO NOT LET THE ANGER OF MY LORD BECOME HOT. YOU KNOW THE PEOPLE, THAT THEY *are set* ON EVIL."

And Aaron gives the same kind of lame excuse that Adam gave God for his sin, he blamed Eve and God:

Genesis 3:12 "THEN THE MAN SAID, "THE WOMAN WHOM YOU GAVE *to be* WITH ME, SHE GAVE ME OF THE TREE, AND I ATE."

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

I can almost hear these same words or those similar echoing through the judgment hall of God on that great day. Elders, preachers, and multitudes of our brethren will stand before God undone because they didn't have the backbone to stand up for truth and the will of God. They allow half-baked, so-called Christians run rough shod over them, didn't teach them properly, refused or ignored the need for discipline within their congregations and then will wonder in that great day why God is irate with them.

v.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.'

Aaron relates the event to Moses accurately; quoting what was said in verse one.

v.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."

Then Aaron departs from the truth completely and even tells a little fairy tale, a lie, in the process. Where he had specifically asked for earrings, molded a calf, carved and shaped it to make it presentable, he omits those details and claims that when he cast the gold into the fire that this golden calf just jumped out of it's own accord. What really happened?

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!"

Aaron actually shaped the calf with his own hands and then declared to the people of Israel that this was the god that had led them out of Egypt.

Read **Exodus 32:25-29** – The Slaying of 3,000

v.25 "NOW WHEN MOSES SAW THAT THE PEOPLE **were** UNRESTRAINED (FOR AARON HAD NOT RESTRAINED THEM, TO **their** SHAME AMONG THEIR ENEMIES),"

In this verse the KJV says that they children of Israel were "NAKED", the ASV says that they were "BROKEN LOOSE" while the NKJV says that they were "UNRESTRAINED", or "NOT RESTRAINED". In effect they were all three. They were "NAKED" in that now God had withdrawn his support as He did Judah:

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

II Chronicles 28:19 “FOR THE **LORD** BROUGHT JUDAH LOW BECAUSE OF AHAZ KING OF ISRAEL, FOR HE HAD ENCOURAGED MORAL DECLINE IN JUDAH AND HAD BEEN CONTINUALLY UNFAITHFUL TO THE **LORD**.”

And as such they were open to the assaults of their enemies. They were also “BROKEN LOOSE”, i.e “UNRESTRAINED” because they were no longer held by the Law of God and as such had broken loose from God, no longer restrained in their conduct by His commandments.

v.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.”

This verse reminds me of the song that we sing at times, that declares that “I am on the Lord’s side”, but only the tribe of Levi responds. Perhaps this was because they were of the tribe that was to become priests, perhaps because they were the tribe of Moses; we aren’t told. Moses gives a commandment regarding the disposition of those who had abandoned the Law of God.

v.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.’”

Based on the context of the verse we can see that this commandment was probably given only to the tribe of Levi. There were far more men in the camp of Israel than would be represented here. Clarke surmises that the Levites went from gate to gate straight through this gathering of about 3,000,000 people rather than from tent to tent as we might surmise. Yet there were only 3,000 men killed.

v.28 “SO THE SONS OF LEVI DID ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF MOSES. AND ABOUT THREE THOUSAND MEN OF THE PEOPLE FELL THAT DAY.”

We can see later that if each man of the tribe of Levi only killed one man that a greater number would have been killed than is reported here. But this is God’s record thus true (John 17:17).

v.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.”

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

Now Moses commands that those who took part on the punishment of Israel to consecrate themselves, make themselves holy again, because even though they had obeyed the commandment of Moses, and therefore of God, they had killed their brethren and were defiled.

Read **Exodus 32:30-35** – Moses' Plea Before God

v.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."

Moses, having persuaded God to not destroy Israel now plans to return to the mountain to see if there can be an atonement made for their sin.

v.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!"

Israel's sin is acknowledged before God. As one commentator points out in his commentary when Moses left God and went down the mountain he did not know the extent or the seriousness of their sin. It was much worse than he expected and now he understands the reason behind God's fury against them. They had violated the basic principle of His first commandments:

Exodus 20:23 "YOU SHALL NOT MAKE *anything to be* WITH ME—GODS OF SILVER OR GODS OF GOLD YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELVES."

The immediate result of their sin would be God's direct punishment of their iniquity but in the next verses we see that there is a longer term result of their sin, just as there is today.

v.32 "YET NOW, IF YOU WILL FORGIVE THEIR SIN—BUT IF NOT, I PRAY, BLOT ME OUT OF YOUR BOOK WHICH YOU HAVE WRITTEN."

Israel was God's chosen people, those today who are faithful Christians are God's chosen people as well. We fully understand the significance of being blotted out of the "LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE", it will prevent us from entering into heaven, our promised land.

Revelation 21:27 "BUT THERE SHALL BY NO MEANS ENTER IT ANYTHING THAT DEFILES, OR CAUSES AN ABOMINATION OR A LIE, BUT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE WRITTEN IN THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE."

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

This is earliest indication that I could find in scripture of a book, probably not a literal book, such as one might hold in their hands, but as one commentator calls it a roster or enrollment of the citizens of The Kingdom. Removal from that enrollment, to be disowned by God, to be cast aside or cast into a devil's hell is not new to the time of Christ. And it is as old as Cain being cast out from among other people.

Moses' fear is that Israel will be cast aside, their enemies allowed to destroy them and he is offering himself in their stead. Paul voiced the same sentiment concerning his Jewish brethren:

Romans 9:3 "FOR I COULD WISH THAT I MYSELF WERE ACCURSED FROM CHRIST FOR MY BRETHREN, MY COUNTRYMEN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH,"

v.33 "AND THE **LORD** SAID TO MOSES, "WHOEVER HAS SINNED AGAINST ME, I WILL BLOT HIM OUT OF MY BOOK."

God is a God of love, God is a God of wrath but the foundation of our faith is assured because God is also a God of justice. Here he simply tells Moses that the ones to be blotted out of his book are those that sin against him. This is another reference that refutes the inherited total depravity doctrine of John Calvin which states that we inherit the sin of Adam and Eve and our forebears. This is further reinforced by the words of the prophet:

Ezekiel 18:20 "THE SOUL WHO SINS SHALL DIE. THE SON SHALL NOT BEAR THE GUILT OF THE FATHER, NOR THE FATHER BEAR THE GUILT OF THE SON. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL BE UPON HIMSELF, AND THE WICKEDNESS OF THE WICKED SHALL BE UPON HIMSELF."

v.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."

Moses is instructed to go, to lead the people of Israel where God will have them go and His angel will guide them. We also see that the language used indicates that Moses will lead them to "THE PLACE" but not into that place. One commentator in his commentary equates this with their wandering the wilderness but I think that he is a little presumptuous because that punishment did not come until they refused to enter Canaan after the spies gave their report.

God also promises to "VISIT PUNISHMENT" upon them for their sins. The psalmist writes:

Psalms 99:8 "YOU ANSWERED THEM, O LORD OUR GOD; YOU WERE TO THEM GOD-WHO-FORGIVES, THOUGH YOU TOOK VENGEANCE ON THEIR DEEDS."

Exodus Chapter Thirty-Two

And this is the pattern that we see throughout their history. God forgave them their sin but punished them because of that sin.

v.35 “SO THE **LORD** PLAGUED THE PEOPLE BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY DID WITH THE CALF WHICH AARON MADE.”

So God “PLAGUED” them because of the calf that Aaron made. We’re not told of the details of His punishment, nor do we have a further record than this.