



THE STORY OF MOSES

PART 12: THE GOLDEN CALF

RICHARD BROWN

EXODUS 32

NIV

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.”

² Aaron answered them, “Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.” ³ So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 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, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.”

EXODUS 32

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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.” 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. ⁷ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. 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, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’

EXODUS 32

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⁹ “I have seen these people,” the Lord said to Moses, “and they are a stiff-necked people. 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.”

¹¹ But Moses sought the favour of the Lord his God. “Lord,” he said, “why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? 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.

EXODUS 32

NIV

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.’” ¹⁴ Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

¹⁵ Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. ¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

EXODUS 32

NIV

¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, “There is the sound of war in the camp.”

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.”

EXODUS 32

NIV

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. ²⁰ And he took the calf the people 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.

²¹ He said to Aaron, “What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?”

EXODUS 32

NIV

²² “Do not be angry, my lord,” Aaron answered. “You know how prone these people are to evil. 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.’ ²⁴ So I told them, ‘Whoever has any gold jewellery, take it off.’ Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!”

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. 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.

EXODUS 32

NIV

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 neighbour.’” ²⁸ The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. 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.”

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.”

EXODUS 32

NIV

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. 32 But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”

³³ The Lord replied to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. 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.”

³⁵ And the Lord struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.

THE GOLDEN CALF

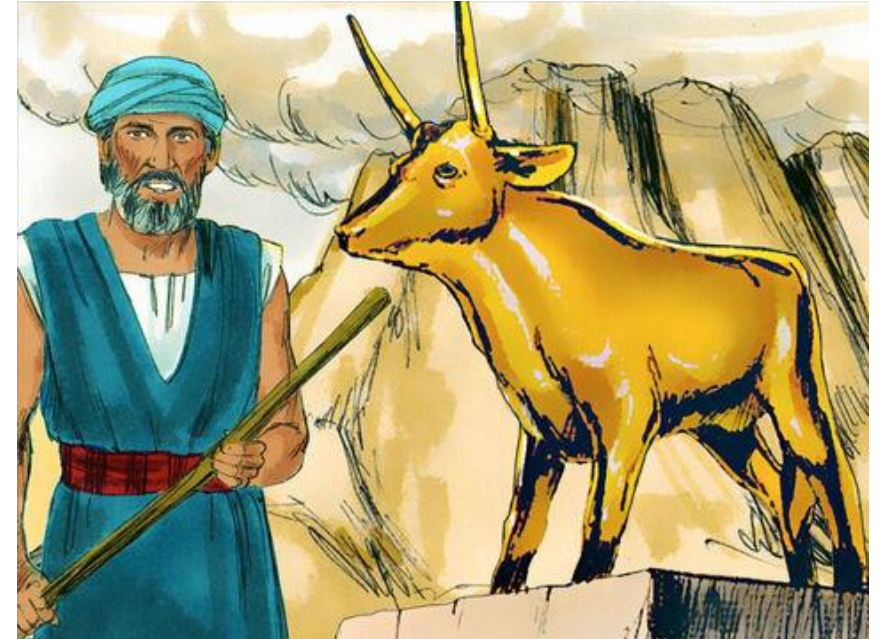
Two questions to ask:

- What went wrong?
- How was it put right?



WHAT WENT WRONG?

- The people took their eyes off God
- They gave into the flesh
- Poor leadership and accountability



WHAT WENT WRONG?

The people took their eyes off God

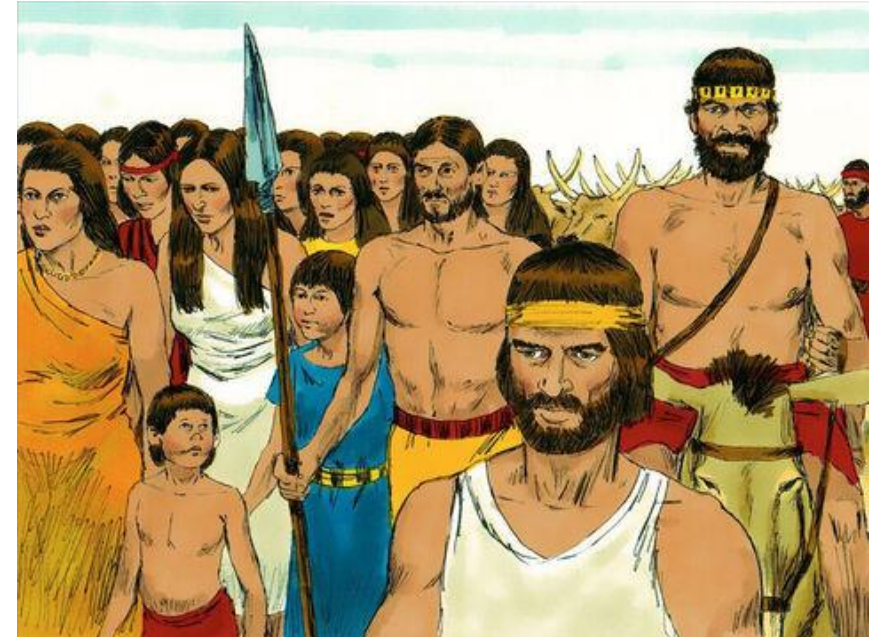
- This is the worse thing you can do as a Christian.
- We need harmony between the mountain of prayer and life in the valley.
- If you take your focus away from God, you can focus on the wrong things and do the wrong things.
- It might appear to be God, but it's not. Worshipping an image of God is not worshipping God.



WHAT WENT WRONG?

The people took their eyes off God

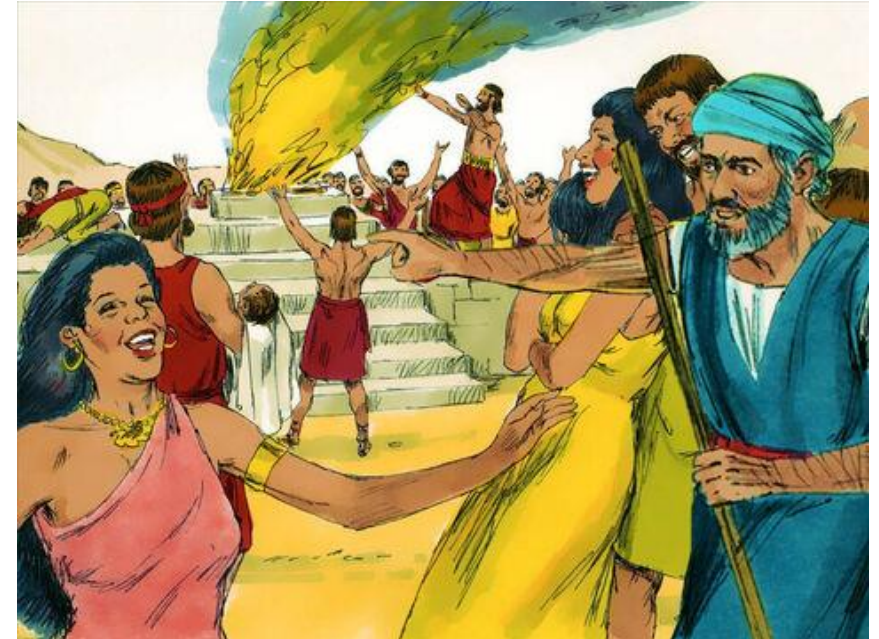
- *“... as for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.”*
- Who brought them out of Egypt? God!
- They always blamed Moses for the difficulties they faced; they never could see God in it.
- *Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:15)*



WHAT WENT WRONG?

The people gave in to their flesh

- Egyptian worship festivals included food and sex, two of the most powerful fleshly temptations.
- The flesh was fueled by impatience – I want it now!!
- So the people take matters into their own hands.
- What happened to *“Fear not, stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord?”*



WHAT WENT WRONG?

The people gave in to their flesh

- Psalm 40:1-2 TPT says this: ¹ *I waited and waited and waited some more, patiently, knowing God would come through for me. Then, at last, he bent down and listened to my cry.* ² *He stooped down to lift me out of danger from the desolate pit I was in, out of the muddy mess I had fallen into. Now he's lifted me up into a firm, secure place and steadied me while I walk along his ascending path.*



WHAT WENT WRONG?

Poor leadership and accountability

- Aaron should have known better. He should have said “No!!”
- He should have reminded the people of God’s words not to make idols of silver and gold.
- He should have pointed them to the mountain where the presence of God could be seen.
- Aaron wanted to please the people!!



WHAT WENT WRONG?

Poor leadership and accountability

- People pleasing is bad leadership.
- Aaron makes matters worse by not taking personal responsibility for his mistake:
“... Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!”
- However, where were the righteous people to hold up his arms to heaven, to challenge the decision and encourage faith?
- One or two good godly people could have helped to avert this.



HOW WAS IT PUT RIGHT?

God's unlimited grace

- God was so angry with the people that he wanted to be left alone to work through his anger
- 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."*
- God opens up an opportunity for Moses to intercede – that's grace.



HOW WAS IT PUT RIGHT?

Moses intercedes for the people

- We see Moses' overwhelming love for his people...
 - He offers himself for God's judgement
 - He turns down God's offer of himself becoming a great nation
 - He now stands between an angry God and a disobedient people.



HOW WAS IT PUT RIGHT?

Moses intercedes for the people

- God says: “Go down, because your people (Moses), whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt”.
- Moses replies: “Lord...why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?”



HOW WAS IT PUT RIGHT?

Moses intercedes for the people

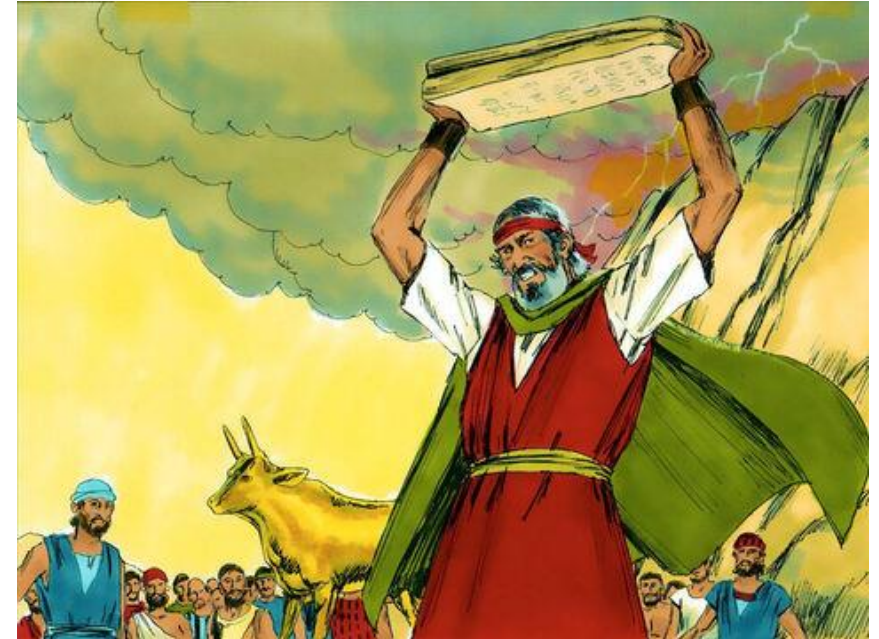
- Moses doesn't want the Egyptians to accuse God of bad intentions
- ¹² *Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'?*
- Moses reminds God of his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- The Lord relents...



HOW WAS IT PUT RIGHT?

Moses intercedes for the people

- Moses speaks to God the word of God.
- 1 John 5: 14-15 ¹⁴ *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*
¹⁵ *And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.*



HOW WAS IT PUT RIGHT?

Moses intercedes for the people

- Moses calls for the people to repent.
- The Law had failed to stop the people from sinning. Moses interceded for the people and they were saved.
- Today Jesus Christ intercedes for us daily. When we fall he stands between us and God's judgement.



IT'S ALL ABOUT GOD'S PRESENCE

Look at the impact on Moses

- Exodus 33:15 *“If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.”*



SUMMARY

- We must not take our eyes off God – His presence is everything. The more we pursue his consuming presence, the harder it will be for our flesh to thrive.
- But if we do fall to the vulnerability and influence of the flesh, know this – Jesus is interceding for us every day. We are, and always will be a child of God, he will not abandon us. Moses' love for his people was incredible. God's love for you and me is immeasurable.
- To receive God's grace we must repent, and he will bring us back on track – and his presence will continue to walk with us.