Exodus 32

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 went up and didn’t give them a timetable… he just went up and didn’t come back. They thought that he died. So their minds went right back to what they were used to in Egypt
- The Fathers marvel at one simple fact… the Manna was still coming down. The pillar of cloud was still visible. And despite all of this, they said “make us gods that shall go before us.”
- “The fool has said in his heart there is no god”
- What does it even mean to “make gods” – are gods created? If gods are created then they aren’t gods…
  - We do this. We might buy something or get something… a new video game or console, a new show on Netflix, a new way of making money, a new house, a new car, and it’s all we can think about throughout the day. We are serving this god.
  - They want a god that they can see with their eyes and follow to “go before them” – keep in mind we’re still within the first year of their exodus from Egypt. It hasn’t been 30 years or something and they forgot… it has been a few months.

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.” So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 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!” 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.” 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.

- This is so strange… Aaron was with Moses from the beginning. Aaron even did some of the miracles with the rod in his hand. Aaron saw the miracles more than anyone. And he received such a high responsibility as high priest.
- The devil attacks the priests and bishops more than us… because if he causes one of them to fall, he can cause a whole congregation to fall.
- Aaron was affected here by peer pressure.
  - This can happen to any of us. Aaron was a good man and a righteous man and a man of faith. But when he succumbed to peer pressure…
- “ALL” the people
- “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt”

    - Was this god even existing when you came out of Egypt? You just made him with your hands! There isn't any logic or wisdom at all
    - What if I told you that the whole world is saying basically the same argument when they say that the world became out of nothing and there is no creator or designer. That it was all random and not created.
        - To say that all the plants and trees and every kind of animal and all of their internal organs and processes and mankind and our wisdom and reason and mind and the whole of cosmos and all the planets… that all of this happened by accident? Random chance? There is no wisdom in that argument…
        - And yet more than half the world believes it. That there is no God and no Creator. As if to say "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt"
- Sin brings sin: After making the calf, Aaron said "I guess we need to make an altar for it" and "tomorrow is a feast"
- "the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play"
    - Eating and drinking… they're not drinking water. They are getting drunk.
    - They aren't playing games… they are dancing in front of the idol, committed adultery and sexual immorality

And the Lord said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. 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!' " And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 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." 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? 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. 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.' " So the Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

- God tells Moses "this people aren't gonna work out" they are stiff-necked people. And God says "let Me alone that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them" – so God is telling Moses that He is just holding Himself back for Moses' sake. Because He knows that Moses loves the people and will intercede for them.
- But truly those people are. We will see in the Book of Numbers that the whole generation of people who came out of Egypt in their adulthood, and who saw the idols in Egypt. Every single one of them will die before entering the Promised Land except for Joshua and Caleb.
- Some people are very bothered by the idea that God's wrath would burn hot against a nation, or that God would destroy a nation in the Old Testament… but you be the judge.

    - The nation was saved from slavery and saw the wonders of the ten plagues. Then they saw a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire in front of them guiding them on the way. They saw the Red Sea open for them and close on their enemies. They saw bitter water turn sweet by putting a branch from a tree in it. They saw water come out of a rock. They saw manna come from the dew of the ground every day. They saw quails come from heaven every day. They saw a battle against the Midianites that when Moses' hands were up they won and when they were down they lost. They saw the thunder and lightning around the mountain. They heard God's voice tell them the Ten Commandments. Their elders and their priests saw the Lord Jesus Christ in a pre-incarnation appearance.
    - They saw all of that and then turned around and created an idol. And started to dance around the idol. And started to commit adultery. And started to commit sexual immorality. And started to be like the other nations – the other nations that would murder their children and dance around the fire, the other nations that would live a whole life of sexual immorality: these are things that even animals do not do.
    - What will that nation look like in 10 years if there isn't a stop to these things? What about 50 years? What about 100 years?
    - We, ourselves, when we hear about other societies that are doing unspeakable things… we, ourselves, might say "why doesn't God just get rid of them"
        - When we hear of ISIS or what is going on in Syria or the war in Ethiopia or what is happening in North Korea or Iran
        - We might even say that the people leading those things are inhumane… or they're animals.
        - Why do we think like that? Because in our hearts we have compassion and we have mercy and we have justice and we want. Is God not just and merciful infinite amount more than we are?
    - Would God let all of these things spread to all nations?
        - It is the same as what happened at the time of the flood
        - "Every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" – even the children in that generation. All they saw is what their parents were doing. And they were the same if not worse than their parents.
        - Same with Sodom and Gomorrah – and when there was one man in the whole city with potential to be good, that man and his whole family were saved
        - Same with Nineveh – the city repented, so God did not destroy them
- "I will make of you a great nation"
    - See how precious Moses is to God? Why? Not because God plays favorites… but because Moses is righteous; Moses would not do something like this
- Moses' Intercession
    - Moses' first intercession is to praise God for all of the works that He did. As if to say "all of the works that You did would be for nothing"
    - Moses' second intercession is "well what would the other nations say? What will they say about You? They will misunderstand You, O God"
    - Moses' third intercession is through those who were before him "Abraham Isaac and Jacob" and of course he doesn't realize that He has the same status they had. In his eyes they are so great, but in our eyes he is just as great as Abraham.

    - God is happy with Moses because God's heart and God's will is in line with these words. So when He sees someone who loves his people so much, He is happy
    - God relents – not because Moses changed His mind. It's not like God did something wrong and is going back on it… it's a human way of understanding how God works. That what these people deserve is the full wrath of God, but because God is merciful, and He knows Moses will intercede, He gives him the chance and then relents.

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. Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets. 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." 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."

- So the whole time Joshua was waiting halfway up the mountain, for Moses to come back. Joshua has nothing to do with what is happening at the camp
- Joshua in his innocence thinks there is war down there… and Moses in his mind is thinking "it would be better if it was war" because Moses knows what is going down there.

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. 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.

- The Fathers see the breaking of the two tablets as a prophecy to Christ who would come and take away the heavy weight of the Law
- They also see it as foreshadowing that the Israelites would keep breaking the law

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.

- Every man is committed to drink up the fruits of his sins
- "You are what you eat" – those who eat Christ's Body and Blood are called the Body of Christ. But those who are devil worshippers become one with the devil.

And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?" So Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. 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 blames the people and says they are evil… but Aaron that's the point of leaving you there. To make sure they don't do evil
- It's the same people as when Moses was there… the only thing that changed is the leader. So who was the problem?
- Even if Moses had died… they should not turn to calves. Were they only following God as respect for Moses?

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.”

- Not taking any responsibility… this is a bad look. He sat down with an engraving tool and fashioned it.
- When we go to confession we have to speak frankly about our sins. Don’t try to walk around them or downplay them or blame someone else
- If we think about the difference between King Saul and King David. King David did a grave sin. He committed adultery and then lied and murdered to cover it up. King Saul offered a sacrifice one day even though he wasn’t a priest. And yet, we call King David righteous and we consider him to be a saint. What’s the difference?
  - When Nathan the prophet went to King David and told him his sin, King David said “I have sinned”
  - When Samuel the prophet went to King Saul and told him his sin, King Saul blamed Samuel and said “it’s your fault because you came late”

Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies), 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. 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.’ ” So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. 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.”

- Aaron did not restrain them, even to the point that they did all the things of idol worship that their enemies the other nations did
- Moses is watching every commandment and every law be broken in front of his eyes… so he carried out the judgments.
  - Exodus 22:20 “He who sacrifices to any god, except to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.”
  - First, Moses asks “whoever is on the Lord’s side – come to me”
    - This is a chance for repentance
    - Some people when they saw Moses they put their heads down in shame and recognized that they did something wrong and retreated to their tents.
    - But some people continued outside their tent… at least 3,000 of them.
- A stiff-necked people needs a harsh punishment

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.” 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! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”

- Moses goes back up to God and says “Oh” as if “aahhhhhhh” – see how Moses still intercedes for them even after seeing what they did! This is the fatherly love and the love of a shepherd for his sheep
- The Fathers say: “He anticipated God’s justice and His mercy. He knew that God would not consume a righteous man because of His justice. And He knew that God would forgive the sinners because of His mercy.”
- He says “It is easier for me to die together with them than to be saved without them.” – Love without limits
- Moses did many wonders and miracles, but what made him the great archprophet was his love for the people

And the Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. 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.”

- God accepted Moses’ intercession. He would not consume them, but would continue to help them and consummate his promises to them.
- Yet, God’s mercy does not contradict His justice. He forgives, but He does not stand loosely. He will visit punishment on them for their sin.
- Go lead the people – teach them the judgments again and the law.

So the Lord plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.

- To see the full picture, we can study Deuteronomy 9:7-21
- “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.’ “Furthermore the Lord spoke to me, saying, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed they are a stiff-necked people. Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.’ “So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire; and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the Lord your God—had made for yourselves a molded calf! You had turned aside quickly from the way which the Lord had commanded you. Then I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the Lord was angry with you, to destroy you. But the Lord listened to me at that time also. And the Lord was very angry with Aaron and would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. 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.
    - Deuteronomy is completing the picture of what was in Exodus. Exodus describes the events as Moses told them in the first year after coming out of Egypt. Deuteronomy is in the last year of wandering – right before they reached the Promised Land.

- Why doesn’t God punish Moses for breaking the tablets? We’ll see that He just tells Moses to make new tablets
  - The Fathers say that this is a sign that the Law will be broken and won’t persist with man. And when Christ came the Law of Moses was fulfilled and done and no longer needed.
- Moses will spend another 40 days on the mountain again without eating or drinking
  - Fasting and Praying for the people

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