

Moses - 5 - God's Lawgiver- 2

The Golden Calf(Ex. 32)

The reason Israel cited for the creation of the golden was the complaint that they did not know what had happened to Moses since he had been gone such a long time.

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." Ex 32:1

A quick reminder of the time frame makes clear that Moses had been gone less than six weeks, and it has been less than six months since they had left Egypt! The ten plagues, passing through the Red Sea, being fed with manna, hearing and seeing God's arrival on Sinai and even hearing God speak the ten commandments were still fresh on their minds.

- 1 Israel left Egypt on the 14th day of the first month. Ex. 12:2, 6
- 2 Israel was camping at the base of Mt Sinai in the third month(**6-10 weeks**). Ex. 19:1-2
- 3 Moses went up to speak with God immediately after they camped. Ex. 19:3
- 4 Moses called the Israel's elders and gave the instructions to prepare to meet God Ex. 19:7-8
- 5 On the 3rd Day God came down on Sinai and spoke the 10 commandments. Ex. 19:16 - 20:1
- 6 Moses returned to Sinai and wrote a part of the Law as recorded in Ex. 20:18 - 24:2. This may have been a day or several days since it is not recorded(**1-2 weeks**).
- 7 Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders from Israel then approached Sinai, and were given a vision of God. Ex. 24:9-11
- 8 After seven days, God commanded Moses to come to the Mountain and receive the tablets of stone on which were written the 10 commandments. Moses instructed the 70 elders to wait his return then entered the thick cloud(**1 week**). Ex. 24:12-18
- 9 Moses was on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights(**6 weeks**). Ex. 24:18

If we add up the 6-10 weeks(2) the 1-2 weeks(6) the 1 week(8) and the 6 weeks(9) we get a total of 15-19 weeks or 4-5 months since leaving Egypt.

When we add to that the awe and fear they must have felt with all the events that happened even before their arrival at Sinai.

1. Their amazement and relief of the passing through the Red Sea(Ex. 14:30-31).
2. Seeing God make the bitter water sweet(Ex. 15:23-25).
3. The gift of Quails and manna(Ex. 16).
4. The water from the rock in the wilderness(Ex. 17:5-7).
5. Defeating the Amalekites(Ex. 17:8-15).

Their decision to violate the Law they had promised to keep, and reject all that they had seen and heard since Moses appeared to them in Egypt and gained their deliverance is almost inconceivable. They Holy Spirit revealed the problem and then tied it directly to us.

For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. 4:1 Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. Heb. 3:16-4:2

They saw and heard all the things that were designed by God to create faith, but they refused to believe. They saw the works but never made the application.

Moses was Faithful in All God's House

These events help us understand that in spite of all the reasons Moses put forth to God about why he was unable to be Israel's deliverer, he was still the best choice by far. What Moses lacked in ability, accomplishments, or confidence were all made insignificant because of one thing. Moses was the only truly faithful man whom God could always rely upon.

Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. 7 Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. Num. 12:6-7

This is the most critical element in any servant of God. That he be faithful to all God's words and laws, that he realize he is a steward over God's things and seeks to be faithful to that stewardship.

Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. 1Cor. 4:2-3

In spite of everything else Moses saw in himself and in spite of all that is recorded about Moses weaknesses(children's circumcision, striking the rock and failing to sanctify God in his words), Moses is

remembered and extolled for this one quality.

From that Generation, Moses appears to be the only Faithful man.

Since Joshua and Caleb were the only men counted worthy to enter the promised land, and God speaks clearly about the rest of Moses' generation as being unfaithful, it is evident there was no one else.

And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God... 36 Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, And they lied to Him with their tongue; 37 For their heart was not steadfast with Him, Nor were they faithful in His covenant. Ps. 78:8, 36-37

consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house... 5 And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, Heb. 3:1-2, 5

When Israel brought their request to Aaron, He did not restrain them.

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." 3 So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Ex 32:2-4

*And when Moses saw that the people were **broken loose**, (for Aaron had **let them loose** for a derision among their enemies,) Ex 32:25 (ASV·ESV)
the people were **unrestrained** (for Aaron had **not restrained** them) (NKJV)
the people were **out of control** — for Aaron had **let them get out of control** (NASB)
the people were **running wild** and that Aaron had let them get **out of control** (NIV)*

To be fair to Aaron, he did not expect the people to carry this as far as they did and did make a feeble effort to sway them, by making the golden calf only a graven image and not another God. But they did not listen and Aaron did nothing more.

Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" 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." 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. Ex 32:4-6

In addition, Aaron received no support or help from the seventy elders or his own sons.

As noted above it was right at the end of the 40 days and nights that this event occurred, the verse just prior to the one about the golden calf makes this clear.

And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. 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; Ex 31:18-32:1

God then warned Moses about what the people were doing and gave Moses the opportunity to decide whether to keep working with them or allow God to destroy them. God calls them "your" people.

And the Lord said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. 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!'" 9 And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 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." Ex 32:7-10

Moses chose to plead for Israel and ask God to forgive them. His pleading takes two parts. First, the damage it would do to God's name and second, the promise he had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God relented, but when Moses actually saw what they had done, his anger became hot.

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. ... 21 And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?" 22 So Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, ... 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." Ex 32:19-20

Moses then took the necessary steps to bring Israel back under the yoke of God's law they had promised to keep. But the price was not cheap.

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. 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.'" 28 So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. Ex 32:26-29