

Exodus 32:17-29 **Moses confronts Golden Calf**

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."

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."

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. 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.

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, that they are set on evil. 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.' 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."

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

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.

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." NKJV

Facts Revealed:

- ✧ Moses Is coming down from the mountain with the Stone Tablets of testimony in his hand that were cut out and engraved by God Himself. [\[Exodus 24:12, 31:18, 32:15-16, 34:28\]](#)
- ✧ Moses had been on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights. [\[Exodus 24:18\]](#)
- ✧ Joshua was still on the mountain with Moses at the end of the 40 days and 40 nights and apparently did not know about the golden calf until they were coming down together, based on his comment to Moses. Apparently the singing was pretty noisy, more like children at play than melodious.
- ✧ Moses knew because God had told him. [\[Exodus 32:7-8\]](#)
- ✧ When they came in sight of the Golden calf and saw it and the dancing, Moses reacted in anger and broke the Stone Tablets at the foot of the mountain. Moses did not strike the Golden Calf image with the Holy Stone Tablets of Testimony, but broke them on the rocks of the mountain.

- ✧ Moses took the Golden Calf and burned it in fire to melt it then he ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the Children of Israel drink it. This pretty well demonstrated that there was no power in the golden calf to defend itself even from destruction by a man. Idolatry was once again proven impotent.
- ✧ Moses held Aaron responsible and demonstrated that he knew that the image was made by Aaron himself, by asking Aaron what the people had done to Aaron that caused him to bring so great a sin on the people.
- ✧ Aaron had been left responsible to guide the people while Moses was on the mountain. [\[Exodus 24:13-15, 32:25\]](#)
- ✧ Aaron resorted to human nature when put on the spot, he blamed the people, and made his excuse by lying to Moses as though it happened by itself by some supernatural power.
- ✧ Aaron had failed his responsibility to restrain the people, and that was to their shame as it demonstrated their refusal to obey the first of the commandments God had given as He spoke from Heaven in their hearing.
- ✧ The Children of Israel had no excuse for their demand for an idol, because:
 - ✧ Moses had already been up the mountain with God and returned safely five times. [\[Exodus 19:3, 18:8, 19:20, 20:21\]](#)
 - ✧ Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and 70 of the Elders of Israel had been up and saw the God of Israel, they ate and drank before Him and returned safely. [\[Exodus 24:9-11\]](#)
 - ✧ They had heard the commandment forbidding idolatry directly from the mouth of God five times. [\[Exodus 20:3, 20:4-5, 20:23, 23:24, and 23:33\]](#)
 - ✧ Moses had recited it to them five times before he went up the mountain for the 40 days and nights including the last time before he wrote them in the book. [\[Exodus 24:3\]](#)
 - ✧ Moses wrote it in a book and read it to them from the book. [\[Exodus 24:4-7\]](#)
 - ✧ The People had promised to obey all the words of God 3 times. [\[Exodus 19:8, 24:3, and 24:7\]](#)
 - ✧ Aaron and Hur were appointed to help anyone who had a problem. [\[Exodus 24:14\]](#)
 - ✧ They had all witnessed all the things God had done in bringing them out of the land of Egypt, and how He had demonstrated the uselessness of all of Egypt's idols and God's power over nature including the opening of the Red Sea. [\[Exodus chapters 7 through 18\]](#)
- ✧ Aaron had no excuse for making the golden calf for the same reasons listed above, and he had been a part of the demonstration from the first as he worked with Moses while God brought the plagues against Egypt to deliver the Children of Israel from the bondage in Egypt.
- ✧ Moses then turned to the people and called for them to make a choice: "Whoever is on Yehowah's side, let him come to me."
- ✧ The tribe of Levi were the ones who responded and came to Moses. Moses and Aaron were of the Tribe of Levi. [\[Exodus 6:16-27\]](#)
- ✧ The command was given to kill the rebels. 3,000 men of the people fell that day.
 - ✧ This demonstrates that the men are held primarily responsible for the morality, not the women.
 - ✧ Moses was far less severe than God had said when He told Moses He would destroy them all, before Moses' intercessory prayer. [\[Exodus 32:10\]](#)
- ✧ After exacting a punishment as an example to the people of the need to be careful in their obedience to the commandments of God, Moses then called for the people to consecrate themselves to Yehowah so that God "may bestow on you a blessing this day."
- ✧ The only grounds they had to expect God to bestow a blessing after their disobedience in making the golden calf, was the fact that they had taken action and blood had been shed for

the sin. It was a form of substitution which is in keeping with God's requirement of a sacrifice of a substitute for sin and His requirement of the death penalty for idolatry.

✧ It was purely an act of mercy that no more were killed.