



# Lesson 17

Psalm 78:58

*They [the Israelites] made God angry by going to their high places. They made Him jealous by worshipping the statues of their gods.*

## Israel Worships a Golden Calf

### Exodus 32:1–35

<sup>1</sup>The people saw that Moses took a long time to come down from the mountain. So they gathered around Aaron. They said to him, “Come. Make us a god that will lead us. This fellow Moses brought us up out of Egypt. But we don’t know what has happened to him.”

<sup>2</sup>Aaron answered them, “Take the gold earrings off your wives, your sons and your daughters. Bring the earrings to me.” <sup>3</sup>So all the people took off their earrings. They brought them to Aaron. <sup>4</sup>He took what they gave him and made it into a metal statue of a god. It looked like a calf. Aaron shaped it with a tool. Then the people said, “Israel, here is your god who brought you up out of Egypt.”

<sup>5</sup>When Aaron saw what they were doing, he built an altar in front of the calf. He said, “Tomorrow will be a feast day to honour the Lord.” <sup>6</sup>So the next day the people got up early. They sacrificed burnt offerings and brought friendship offerings. They sat down to eat and drink. Then they got up to dance wildly in front of their god.

<sup>7</sup>The Lord spoke to Moses. He said, “Go down. Your people you brought up out of Egypt have become very sinful. <sup>8</sup>They have quickly turned away from what I commanded them. They have made themselves a metal statue of a god in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down and sacrificed to it. And they have said, ‘Israel, here is your god who brought you up out of Egypt.’

<sup>9</sup>“I have seen these people,” the Lord said to Moses. “They are stubborn. <sup>10</sup>Now leave me alone. I will destroy them because of My great anger. Then I will make you into a great nation.”

<sup>11</sup>But Moses asked the Lord his God to have mercy on the people. “Lord,” he said, “why should You destroy Your people in anger? You used Your great power and mighty hand to bring them out of Egypt. <sup>12</sup>Why should the Egyptians say, ‘He brought them out to hurt them. He wanted to kill them in the mountains. He wanted to wipe them off the face of the earth?’ Turn away from Your great anger. Please take pity on Your people. Don’t destroy them! <sup>13</sup>Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel. You made a promise to them in Your own name. You said, ‘I will make your children after you as many as the stars in the sky. I will give them all this land I promised them. It will belong to them forever.’” <sup>14</sup>Then the Lord took pity on His people. He didn’t destroy them as He had said He would.

<sup>15</sup>Moses turned and went down the mountain. He had the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. Words were written on both sides of the tablets, front and back. <sup>16</sup>The tablets were the work of God. The words had been written by God. They had been carved on the tablets.

<sup>17</sup>Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting. So he said to Moses, “It sounds like war in the camp.”

<sup>18</sup>Moses replied,

“It’s not the sound of winning.

It’s not the sound of losing.

It’s the sound of singing that I hear.”

<sup>19</sup>As Moses approached the camp, he saw the calf. He also saw the people dancing. So he was very angry. He threw the tablets out of his hands. They broke into pieces at the foot of the mountain. <sup>20</sup>He took the calf the people had made. He burned it in the fire. Then he ground it into powder. He scattered it on the water. And he made the Israelites drink it.

<sup>21</sup>He said to Aaron, “What did these people do to you? How did they make you lead them into such terrible sin?”

<sup>22</sup>“Please don’t be angry,” Aaron answered. “You know how these people like to do what is evil. <sup>23</sup>They said to me, ‘Make us a god that will lead us. This fellow Moses brought us up out of Egypt. But we don’t know what has happened to him.’ <sup>24</sup>So I told them, ‘Anyone who has any gold jewellery, take it off.’ They gave me the gold. I threw it into the fire. And out came this calf!”

<sup>25</sup>Moses saw that the people were running wild. Aaron had let them get out of control. The people had become a joke to their enemies. <sup>26</sup>Moses stood at the entrance to the camp. He said, “Anyone on the Lord’s side, come to me.” All the Levites joined him.

<sup>27</sup>Then he spoke to them. He said, “The Lord, the God of Israel, says, ‘Each man must put on his sword. Then he must go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other. Each man must kill his brother and friend and neighbor.’” <sup>28</sup>The Levites did as Moses commanded. About 3,000 of the people died that day. <sup>29</sup>Then Moses said to the Levites, “You have been set apart for the Lord today. You fought against your own sons and brothers. And He has blessed you this day.”

<sup>30</sup>The next day Moses said to the people, “You have committed a terrible sin. But now I will go up to the Lord. Maybe if I pray to Him, He will forgive your sin.”

<sup>31</sup>So Moses went back to the Lord. He said, “These people have committed a terrible sin. They have made a god out of gold for themselves. <sup>32</sup>Now please forgive their sin. But if You won’t, then erase my name out of the book You have written.”

<sup>33</sup>The Lord replied to Moses. The Lord said, “I will erase out of My book only the names of those who have sinned against Me. <sup>34</sup>Now go. Lead the people to the place I spoke about. My angel will go ahead of you. But when the time comes for Me to punish, I will punish them for their sin.”

<sup>35</sup>The Lord struck the people with a plague. That’s because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.

## Questions

① What was bothering the people of Israel? The people were bothered that Moses was taking a \_\_\_\_\_ time to come down from the mountain. (Ex. 32:1)

② Were the people worried that Moses was hurt? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_. They were only worried about **thems**\_\_\_\_\_.

- 3 What did the people want? They wanted \_\_\_\_\_ to make them a \_\_\_\_\_ that would \_\_\_\_\_ them. (Ex. 32:1)
- 4 What title did the people use to talk about Moses? They called him “\_\_\_\_\_ Moses” (not “our leader Moses”). (Ex. 32:1)
- 5 How did Aaron respond to the people’s sinful request? Aaron answered the people by telling them to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ earrings off their wives, sons, and daughters, and to \_\_\_\_\_ those items to him. (Ex. 32:2)



Sadly, Aaron gave in too easily to peer pressure. That is probably why God called Moses, not Aaron, to lead Israel.

- 6 What did Aaron do with all the gold earrings the people brought him? Aaron took the earrings and made them into a metal \_\_\_\_\_ of a \_\_\_\_\_ in the shape of a \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ shaped the statue with a \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 32:4)



It must have taken a considerable amount of time for Aaron to make this statue.

- 7 What did the people of Israel do with the statue Aaron made? The people presented it to themselves and said, “Here is your \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_ you up \_\_\_\_\_ of Egypt.” (Ex. 32:4)



Seriously?

- 8 When Aaron saw what the people were doing, what else did he build with his talented hands? He built an \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ of the calf. (Ex. 32:5)
- 9 How did Aaron try to make this sinful act seem godly? He announced that the next day would be a \_\_\_\_\_ day to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 32:5)



I guess Aaron *tried* to steer the people back to the Lord, but I’m not sure how Aaron thought the Lord would feel honoured while His people were worshipping a false god.

- 10 Were the people excited about this feast day? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_. The people got up \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ burnt \_\_\_\_\_ and brought \_\_\_\_\_ offerings to the powerless statue Aaron had made. (Ex. 32:6)
- 11 What did the people do after they sat down to eat and drink? The people got up to \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ of their speechless god. (Ex. 32:6)

- 12 Did the Lord see what was happening? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 32:7)
- 13 How did the Lord describe the people of Israel? The Lord described them as having become \_\_\_\_\_ sinful. (Ex. 32:7)
- 14 Had the Lord warned the Israelites, several times, not to make statues of gods for themselves to bow down to and worship? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_.
- 15 Were these warnings not long ago? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_. The people had \_\_\_\_\_ turned away from what the Lord had commanded them. (Ex. 32:8)
- 16 What did the Lord say He was going to do to these people? Why? The Lord was going to \_\_\_\_\_ them, because of His great and holy \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 32:10)
- 17 Whom was the Lord going to make into a great nation instead? The Lord was going to make \_\_\_\_\_ into a great nation instead. (Ex. 32:10)
- 18 Was Moses happy he wouldn't have to lead these stubborn people anymore? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 32:11)



Moses had really changed! It was not long ago, at the burning bush, that Moses had tried very hard to convince the Lord to give the job of leading the Israelites to someone else.

- 19 How did Moses actually respond to the Lord? Moses asked the Lord to have \_\_\_\_\_ on the people. (Ex. 32:11)
- 20 After Moses showed his love for the people of Israel, what did the Lord do? The Lord took \_\_\_\_\_ on His people and \_\_\_\_\_ destroy them as He had said He was going to. (Ex. 32:14)



Moses passed the test, which showed why the Lord had called Moses to be the leader of the people of Israel. Moses put the people before himself.

- 21 Did Joshua know why the people were making so much noise? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_. Joshua thought it sounded like \_\_\_\_\_ in the camp. (Ex. 32:17)
- 22 What did Moses do when he saw the calf and the people dancing? Moses got \_\_\_\_\_ angry and \_\_\_\_\_ the stone \_\_\_\_\_ out of his hands, causing the tablets to \_\_\_\_\_ into \_\_\_\_\_ at the foot of the mountain. (Ex. 32:19)
- 23 What did Moses do with the calf the people had made? Moses \_\_\_\_\_ the calf, \_\_\_\_\_ in it the fire, ground it into \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ it on the \_\_\_\_\_, and made the Israelites \_\_\_\_\_ it. (Ex. 32:20)

- 24) When Moses asked Aaron how the people had made him lead them into such terrible sin, did Aaron say he was sorry and take responsibility? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_. Aaron blamed it all on the \_\_\_\_\_, even though he had been put in charge of them. (Ex. 32:22–24)
- 25) Did Aaron lie about how the calf was made? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_. Aaron said he threw the people's gold jewellery into the fire and \_\_\_\_\_ came the \_\_\_\_\_, like magic! (Ex. 32:24)



Really, Aaron?

- 26) What had the people become to their enemies? Why? The people had become a \_\_\_\_\_ to their enemies, because Aaron had let them get \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 32:25)
- 27) When Moses stood at the entrance of the camp and said, "Anyone on the Lord's side, come to me," how many of those who didn't come died? About \_\_\_\_\_ of those who didn't come to Moses died by the sword that day. (Ex. 32:26, 28)



They chose not to be on the Lord's side.

Joshua 24:14–15

*"So have respect for the Lord. Serve Him. Be completely faithful to Him.... Choose for yourselves right now whom you will serve.... But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."*

- 28) Just like the people of Israel, what decision do you have to make? I have to \_\_\_\_\_ for myself whether or not I will \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord and be \_\_\_\_\_ faithful to Him.
- 29) Which of the people joined Moses to be on the Lord's side? All the \_\_\_\_\_ (those who belonged to the tribe of Levi) joined Moses. (Ex. 32:26)
- 30) What happened to the rest of the people (those who refused to be on the Lord's side)? Moses commanded the \_\_\_\_\_ to go back and forth among the rest and start killing them. (Ex. 32:27–28)
- 31) What was Moses willing to have the Lord do if the Lord would not forgive the people's terrible sin? Moses was willing to have the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ Moses' name out of the book the Lord had written. (Ex. 32:32)
- 32) What did the Lord reply to Moses? The Lord told Moses that He would \_\_\_\_\_ out of His \_\_\_\_\_ the names of \_\_\_\_\_ who had \_\_\_\_\_ Him. (Ex. 32:33)

- 33 What did the Lord tell Moses to do? The Lord told Moses to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the people to the \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord had spoken about. (Ex. 32:34)
- 34 Who would go ahead of Moses and the people? The Lord's \_\_\_\_\_ would go ahead of them. (Ex. 32:34)
- 35 What else did the Lord do to the people of Israel to punish them for worshipping the calf Aaron had made? The Lord struck them with a \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 32:35)

How did the Holy Spirit speak to you this week as you studied these Bible verses? In other words, what did you learn this week from reading God's Word?

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