

April 22, 2018 - Ex. 32:15 – 33:23 - The Tablets broken
Torah Reading: Exodus 32:15 – 33:23 - The Tablets broken
Psalm 66
Haftarah: 2 Samuel 22:10-18, 51

Exodus 32:15-16 - And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

"And the tables were the work of God" - "all the delight of the Holy One, blessed is He, is with the Torah" The rabbis considered this meant that all of God's works were wrapped up in the Torah itself.

- **John 6:28** - "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus replied, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent.'"

Exodus 32:20 - "And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it."

("upon the water" = A brook according to Deuteronomy 9:21)

Rashi - He intended to test them like women suspected of adultery [are tested, as prescribed in **Numbers 5:11-31**] (A.Z. 44a) Three [different] death penalties were meted out there: (1) If there were witnesses [to the worship] and warning [had been issued to the sinners, they were punished] by the sword, according to the law (Deut. 13:13-18) that applies to the people of a city that has been led astray who are many [people involved]. (2) [Those who practiced idolatry with] witnesses but without warning [died] from a plague, as it is said: "Then the Lord struck the people with a plague" (verse 35). (3) [Those who practiced idolatry both] without witnesses and without warning [died] from dropsy, for the water tested them and their stomachs swelled up (Yoma 66b).

Gold = glory. The breaking off of their gold earrings was a picture of their giving glory to the idol.

The Targum of Jonathan observes, that whoever gave any golden vessel towards the making of the calf, there was a sign appeared in his countenance. Whoever kissed the calf with his whole heart, his lips became golden. (Pirke Eliezer, c. 45.)

See **Psalm 115:8** - "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them."

Exodus 32:23 - Aaron's excuse is to blame the people: "For **THEY** said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us..." (Compare with the blaming in **Genesis 3:12**)

We learn that Moses prayed/interceded for Aaron so he was spared by God's mercy:

- **Deuteronomy 9:20** - "And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time."

Exodus 32:25 - "And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)"

Rashi - Their shame and disgrace was revealed, as in "and he shall uncover (וּפָרַע) the woman's head" (**Numbers 5:18**).

Exodus 32:26 - "Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him."

Moses (and Joshua) are types of Christ in various ways in Exodus.

Here, Moses is seen as Jesus in his holy indignation, cleansing of the Temple after making "a scourge of small cords" (**John 2:15**) driving out those who had desecrated his Father's house. Or as in **Revelation 1:14** "with eyes as a flame of fire."

Israel had violated the command against idolatry and thus had broken all the commandments (**James 2:10**). So Moses broke both tablets.

For us, idolatry is anything that displaces God from our hearts - anything we trust in, depend on or get sustenance from instead of God.

The severe actions of the Levites compares to the need for preaching of the cross - preaching our death along with Christ on the cross seems like a harsh doctrine, but its fruit is a redeemed people.

Instead of swords, we are given the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (**Ephesians 6:17**). The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual (**2 Corinthians 10:4**)

The 3,000 killed here are deliberately mirrored in the mention of 3,000 saved at Pentecost.

- **Acts 2:41** - "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

The purging of the idolators was necessary to keep the whole people from being destroyed.

The Levites - who executed God's command without regard to personal sympathies - were honored later, for our admonition:

Deuteronomy 33:8-11 - "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again."

Moses Intercedes for the People

Exodus 32:31-32 - "And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."

Exodus 33:1-3 - God directs Moses to continue to go possess the Promised Land, but says He will not be with them, only an Angel will go before them.

Exodus 33:5 - If God continued with them, He would have to "consume them in a moment."

Up until now, there was no apparent repentance mentioned by the people.

Exodus 33:5-6 - "For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb."

ornaments = *`adiy* - adornments, finery, anything one might be praised for. Pride.

This was a time for mourning not pride. The people responded as God commanded, but their fate still hung in the balance.

The Tent of the Congregation

There was as yet no Tabernacle built. The Tabernacle is the word *mishkan* - place of dwelling. There was a tent (*ohel* - tent) where the people had previously gathered to bring questions to Moses, and where Moses talked with God as the cloud rested. Now Moses took the tent and placed it outside the camp.

Exodus 33:7 - "And Moses took the tabernacle (*ohel* - tent), and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle (*ohel*- tent) of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle (*ohel* - tent) of the congregation, which was without the camp."

"every one which sought the LORD" - repentant believers would go out to this tent to

gather. After some hesitation, all the people broke down and worshipped the Lord.

This episode is important because it clarifies a passage in Hebrews. The rejection of Messiah was a greater sin than the idolatry of the golden calf. Christ had to separate himself from Israel - crucified outside the gates of the city - in order to provide a way of restoration

- **Hebrews 13:12-14** - "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

Now Moses again intercedes for Israel

Exodus 33:12 - "And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people."

God answers in what probably should be a question:

Exodus 33:14 - "And he said, 'Shall My presence shall go with thee, and shall I give thee rest?'"

Moses says - if not, then it's all for nothing, so we might as well not go.

God's answer of mercy:

Exodus 33:17 - "And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name."

Moses then makes a bold and extravagant request:

Exodus 33:18 - "And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory."

Exodus 33:19 - "And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."

Exodus 33:23 - "And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen."

Rashi - This means that even Moses would not be permitted to grasp the essence of God, only His attributes and His deeds. To see his back parts: He showed him the knot of the tefillin. -[from Ber. 7a]

The “tefillah shel rosh,” the phylactery worn on the head, is held in place by means of a leather strap tied to the back of the head with a special knot. The knot symbolizes a level of comprehension that takes into account the abilities of those contemplating, so that they may grasp and utilize this knowledge. ‘Face’ in Hebrew is panim, similar to the word p'nim, meaning inner essence. True knowledge of God’s infinite reality is God’s ‘face.’ Knowledge of God’s reality according to our limited understanding, on the other hand, is referred to as God’s ‘back.’ Moses was granted this partial, indirect knowledge — a grasp of the Divine that we are able to appreciate and apply in our finite world.

(See <http://www.ravkooktorah.org/KITISA61.htm>)

God's glory is his goodness!

Even to see God's "backside" Moses' flesh had to be completely hidden away in the cleft of the Rock, and be covered by God's hand. Similarly, our flesh has to be covered by the cross, buried and taken away, before we have any indication of God's glory and goodness.

God's Presence with Israel Again

Matthew 28:20 - "...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Unlike Moses, we have been given the joy of seeing God face to face:

- **2 Corinthians 4:6** - “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.