

**File No. 31**

**EXODUS 32:1 – 34:29**

Exodus 24:12–18; 25:8,9;

**THE GOLDEN CALF / MOSES PRAYS FOR HIS PEOPLE**

(SBS Bk 1 Story No 46 & 47)

*Story Notes*

**Exodus 32**

The Bible is never a mere code to keep, even though that code is God's law. The Bible is the revelation of God in the context of the sin of his people. Only by the revelation of his severe yet gracious dealing with sin is his nature fully revealed.

There could hardly have been a more blatant breaking of the covenant Israel had vowed to keep. It involved the weakness of Aaron, the one who was to be central to their worship. But when Moses heard that God would make a new people from him rather than from these people who had come through the Red Sea, he refused to accept that this was God's final word. They had been baptized into him as covenant head (I Cor. 10:2) and Moses accepted this responsibility by praying that they would still receive what God had promised to them. He would not accept that they were his people, as God had called them. They were the Lord's people.

The tablets, on which God had written, were smashed, signifying that unless God spoke again, it remained in doubt as to who these people were. Were they still under his covenant? Moses believed so. But the continuing revelry had to be stopped and his own tribe assisted him, showing that they, with him, were the Lord's. (We are not told where Aaron was in all this.) But atonement had to be made, and Moses suggested that he may be able to make atonement—given that Aaron would be unable to do this (cf. Exod. 29:37; 30:10). No such offering was prescribed to deal with such high-handed sin. Only our true Head, Jesus Christ, was able to do this and to make atonement once for all.

**Exodus 33**

The situation was far from resolved because the Lord had not assured Israel of his personal presence and a plague had fallen on the people. God would not go with them personally for Israel's sins would so draw God's anger as to consume them. However, they were to remove their jewellery and wait for God's word to them. Here we are told of the temporary means Moses used for meeting with God as a friend. Moses counted on this friendship with God to ask him that there would be no lessening of his presence, and that he may see the glory of God.

**Exodus 34**

In receiving copy two of the covenant, Moses was allowed to hear the Lord's name proclaimed. The Lord was merciful. He would deal with sin, even to four generations, but his steadfast love would last for thousands of generations. In the power of this proclamation, not on the basis of his own intercessions, Moses asked again for the Lord to forgive Israel and to take her as his inheritance. The answer was 'Yes'. Some of the provisions of the earlier covenant book were repeated and the law was rewritten.

When God showed his glory to Moses, the face of Moses shone. This made Israel afraid. But Moses called them to him. Paul tells us that the veil Moses put on after speaking to the people was to hide the fading glory (this was possibly a Jewish tradition). But, he went on to say that no such veiling is necessary with Christ in whom we have seen the glory of God (II Cor. 3:7-18) — full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

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