

Into the Promised Land
Joshua's Story
Lesson #3 – Finishing Ascent #6
• HANDOUT •

► We pick up the story with Moses inside the cloud.

► While he was inside the cloud for the 40 days and 40 nights, Moses received the Tablets of Stone on which God had written the Decalogue. He also received minute detail instructions regarding the building of the Tabernacle God told Moses to construct. God stated to Moses the purpose for the Tabernacle: so that God might dwell among His people. [The instructions, which are covered in chapters 26 through 31 of Exodus, included plans for the various altars, the furniture which resided within the Tabernacle, the color scheme and material Moses was to use, how to frame the Tabernacle, the material to use for creating the coverings and curtains, and also the garments which the priests were to wear.]

► After this the Lord tells Moses: "Look, I have specifically chosen Bezalel son of Uri, grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts. He is a master craftsman, expert in working with gold, silver, and bronze. He is skilled in engraving and mounting gemstones and in carving wood. He is a master at every craft! "And I have personally appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to be his assistant. Moreover, I have given special skill to all the gifted craftsmen so they can make all the things I have commanded you to make: the Tabernacle; the Ark of the Covenant; the Ark's cover -- the place of atonement; all the furnishings of the Tabernacle; the table and its utensils; the pure gold lampstand with all its accessories; the incense altar; the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils; the washbasin with its stand; the beautifully stitched garments -- the sacred garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments for his sons to wear as they minister as priests; the anointing oil; the fragrant incense for the Holy Place. The craftsmen must make everything I have commanded you." [Reference: Exodus 31:2-11]

► After completing the instructions, God warns Moses: He was not to deviate from the pattern given him.

Q: God chose Bezalel and as his assistant, Oholiab, to oversee the work of the Tabernacle. God also gave special skills and His Spirit to all who were to serve as craftsmen. What is significant about this?

Just before receiving the Tablets of Stone, God speaks about respecting the Sabbath ...

Exodus 31:13, 16-18 • "Tell the people of Israel: 'Be careful to keep my Sabbath day, for the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between me and you from generation to generation. It is given so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy.

The people of Israel must keep the Sabbath day by observing it from generation to generation. This is a covenant obligation for all time. It is a permanent sign of my covenant with the people of Israel. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he stopped working and was refreshed."

When the Lord finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, written by the finger of God.

Q: How are Christians to understand the command for a Sabbath rest, today?

Q: Scripture shows us that there was a significant issue about the Sabbath between Jesus and the Pharisees. How did Jesus handle the subject of the Sabbath?

► The following incident from Mark is also reported in both Matthew 12:1-8 and Luke 6:1-5.

Mark 2:23-28 • One Sabbath day as Jesus was walking through some grain-fields, his disciples began breaking off heads of grain to eat. But the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look, why are they breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath?" Jesus said to them, "Haven't you ever read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He went into the house of God (during the days when Abiathar was high priest) and broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. He also gave some to his companions." Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!"

Paul put the issues of the Sabbath this way in Colossians:

Colossians 2:16-17 • Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Then, as God gives Moses the Tablets of Stone, God reveals to Moses what is going on at the Camp of Israel ...

Exodus 32:7-8 • The Lord told Moses, "Quick! Go down the mountain! Your people whom you brought from the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. How quickly they have turned away from the way I commanded them to live! They have melted down gold and made a calf, and they have bowed down and sacrificed to it. They are saying, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"

Q: What dramatic and abrupt verbal change took place in these verses?

Q: What has caused this abrupt change?

Q: Of all that had deteriorated so quickly, what was probably the worst of their behavior?

Before Moses leaves God's Presence to deal with what is going on in Israel's Camp, God makes a startling announcement ...

Exodus 32:9-10 • Then the Lord said, "I have seen how stubborn and rebellious these people are. Now leave me alone so my fierce anger can blaze against them, and I will destroy them. Then I will make you, Moses, into a great nation."

Q: Do you think God was serious when he threatened to destroy the people for their actions?

Moses responds to God through diplomatic reasoning ...

Exodus 32:11-14 • But Moses tried to pacify the Lord his God. "O Lord!" he said. "Why are you so angry with your own people whom you brought from the land of Egypt with such great power and such a strong hand? Why let the Egyptians say, 'Their God rescued them with the evil intention of slaughtering them in the mountains and wiping them from the face of the earth'? Turn away from your fierce anger. Change your mind about this terrible disaster you have threatened against your people!

Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You bound yourself with an oath to them, saying, *'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven. And I will give them all of this land that I have promised to your descendants, and they will possess it forever.'*

► So the Lord changed his mind about the terrible disaster He had threatened to bring on His people.

Q: How does Moses reason with God?

Q: What do we glean from the fact that the Lord changed His mind?

**Meanwhile, as Moses & Joshua descend the Mountain,
we'll look at what has been going on in the Camp of Israel ...**

Exodus 32:1-6 • When the people saw how long it was taking Moses to come back down the mountain, they gathered around Aaron. "Come on," they said, "make us some gods who can lead us. We don't know what happened to this fellow, Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt."

So Aaron said, "Take the gold rings from the ears of your wives and sons and daughters, and bring them to me." All the people took the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron. Then Aaron took the gold, melted it down, and molded it into the shape of a calf.

When the people saw it, they exclaimed, "O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of the land of Egypt!" Aaron saw how excited the people were, so he built an altar in front of the calf. Then he announced, "Tomorrow will be a festival to the Lord!" The people got up early the next morning to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. After this, they celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry.

Q: What seems to be the main issue with the people in the camp?

Q: Whose idea was it to make an idol from the people's gold earrings?

Q: Of all the idols Aaron could have chosen, why the Golden Calf?



Q: Beyond actually creating this idol, what was Aaron's worst grievous action?

Moses, along with his aide, Joshua, arrive at the foot of the Mountain ...

Exodus 32:15-20 • Then Moses turned and went down the mountain. He held in his hands the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. These tablets were God's work; the words on them were written by God himself.

When Joshua heard the boisterous noise of the people shouting below them, he exclaimed to Moses, "It sounds like war in the camp!" But Moses replied, "No, it's not a shout of victory nor the wailing of defeat. I hear the sound of a celebration."

When they came near the camp, Moses saw the calf and the dancing, and he burned with anger. He threw the stone tablets to the ground, smashing them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf they had made and burned it. Then he ground it into powder, threw it into the water, and forced the people to drink it.

Q: Other than the anger and disgust that Moses obviously felt in that moment when he saw what the people were doing, what is the significant meaning behind the act of Moses smashing the Stone Tablets to the ground at the foot of the mountain?

Q: What three significant results occurred when Moses took the burned calf, ground it into powder, added it to the water, and made the people drink it?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now Moses turns his attention to the man in charge. Moses confronts his brother, Aaron...

Exodus 32:21-24 • Finally, he turned to Aaron and demanded, "What did these people do to you to make you bring such terrible sin upon them?"

"Don't get so upset, my lord," Aaron replied. "You yourself know how evil these people are. They said to me, 'Make us gods who will lead us. We don't know what happened to *this fellow* Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt.' So I told them, 'Whoever has gold jewelry, take it off.' When they brought it to me, I simply threw it into the fire -- and out came this calf!"

Q: Moses asks Aaron to explain his actions. How does Aaron respond?

Q: Why would Aaron try to make it sound that there had been a miracle when he claimed that he only threw the gold into the house and out popped the Golden Calf.

Q: What bothers you the most about what Aaron did and then said?

Moses issues a challenge to Israel: who are you going to stand with?
Will they choose God or Idolatry?

► After Moses destroyed the Calf and confronted Aaron he is now ready to confront the people. Moses stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, "All of you who are on the Lord's side, come here and join me." Only the men from the tribe of Levi joined Moses. Those who were in open rebellion to God died that day – put to death, by the sword, at the hand of the Levites. Scripture simply states: "about 3000 people died that day."

This incidence is what set the Levites apart from the rest of Israel from that day forward.

Moses said: "Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the Lord ... today you have earned a blessing."

The next day Moses called the people together.

He said, "You have committed a great sin So now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can made atonement for your sin."

Q: How are we to understand the death of these people? Was God being unreasonably cruel?

► **The sin of the Golden Calf creates the need for Moses to, once again, return to Mt. Sinai. This Ascent is for the purpose of making an Atonement for the people's sin. This is where we will pick up the story next time ...**



Next Time • Lesson #4
"Ascents #7 and #8"

