

Exodus 32:7-10

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-32/exodus-327-10/>

The LORD informed Moses of the events happening in the Israelite camp. He then told him to go down from Mount Sinai to observe the golden calf that they were worshipping. The LORD then asked Moses to let Him alone so He could execute His judgment upon the people for this grievous sin.

The LORD saw what the people were doing, so He told Moses *to go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.* It is interesting that the LORD referred to the Israelites as *your people* (meaning Moses') instead of "My people" as in Exodus 3:7, 10, and many times during the plagues Exodus 5 – 11). He even refers to the people as those *whom you* (Moses) *brought up from the land of Egypt.* The LORD probably phrased it this way because the people had violated and disgraced the covenant to which they had agreed. Now, according to the covenant, they deserved to be judged.

The people had *corrupted themselves.* This word (Heb. "shakhat," to destroy, corrupt) was used in Genesis 6:11 to describe the depraved condition of humankind just before the Flood.

The people were *corrupted* because *they have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them,* specifically the Ten Commandments and supporting laws. They had agreed to enter a covenant with God and fully comply with His commands only a few days before (Exodus 24:3). Now they had committed an overt and gross violation of the covenant.

Specifically, *they have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'* The LORD did not directly mention their "play" (Exodus 32:6), but God did say that the people had *worshipped* the calf, which included their play (sexual immorality). The people had broken their oath to keep the commands of their covenant with God, and committed a horrible act of unfaithfulness against their faithful LORD.

Next, the Lord said to Moses, "*I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.*" The word "obstinate" can also be translated "stiff-

necked”, meaning that the people were not willing to bow in submission to the LORD’s authority. Their neck was stiff, and would not bow to another authority. They “bowed” to the calf, but they would not bow before the LORD. This is because the calf did their bidding, so they were actually bowing to themselves. The LORD asked them to do His bidding, for their own benefit, but they were not willing. Instead, they insisted on their own way, which was a way of self-destruction and judgment.

The LORD then told Moses to *let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them*. This sin and blatant disregard for the LORD was worthy of the LORD’s burning *anger* and could not go unpunished. The LORD had given them a demonstration of His might in order that they might fear and obey Him. As Moses told the people when they trembled in fear before the LORD:

“Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.”

([Exodus 20:20](#))

The people should have understood that to sin against the LORD was something to be feared more than death. Now the LORD’s proposed punishment is death. He proposes to *destroy* all the Israelites other than Moses. God told Moses that His plan was to start again and *make of you a great nation*. This would still fulfill God’s promise to Abraham, but would create other issues, as Moses will point out.

The phrase *make of you a great nation* is also used in [Genesis 12:2](#) when the LORD promises to reward Abraham to make him a *great nation* if he will obey the LORD. The LORD later granted the land as a promised reward to Abraham, in [Genesis 15](#). God promised that Abraham’s descendants would be as numerous as the stars and the sand on the shore, as a reward for his faithfulness. So, when God said the same thing here to Moses, He was conveying an alternate approach to satisfy His promise to Abraham. Just as all of Abraham’s descendants come through one child of promise, Isaac, now all descendants of Abraham would come through Moses. God proposes to get rid of the people who broke His covenant and build a nation from Moses, who has been faithful.

This proposal is consistent with Suzerain Vassal treaties. When Israel became a vassal to Babylon, then broke their treaty and became a vassal to Egypt, they suffered a similar fate; their country was torn down and had to be restarted. For their unfaithfulness as vassals, Babylon invaded Judah,

destroyed Jerusalem, and exiled most of the surviving Jews to Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah told Judah that if they would be faithful vassals to Babylon, they would not be destroyed ([Jeremiah 27:7-11;17](#)). But Judah trusted in Egypt and suffered destruction and exile as their judgement. Here God proposes something similar.

This might have been a shock to Moses when he heard this. He was up on the mountain and unaware that any of this was happening. It might have been tempting to many people to agree to this plan. In fact the Lord might be testing Moses. Moses would be relieved of substantial responsibility, and become a sole patriarch of a great nation. However, Moses continues to do his job of leading the people by serving them. Moses will now demonstrate why the Bible says he was the most humble man in the entire earth ([Numbers 12:3](#)). Humility is seeing things as they are, including recognizing our own gifts and applying them in service to others. Moses will now provide a sterling example of such humility.

Biblical Text:

⁷Then the Lord spoke to Moses, “Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*. ⁸They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!’” ⁹The Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. ¹⁰Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.”