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They Gave Me This Gold, I Threw It into a Fire and Out Came This Calf
32: 21-24

They gave me this gold, I threw it into a fire and out came this calf DIG: Where did the Israelites get the gold to make the golden idol? What punishment did the Israelites suffer for making the golden calf? What does the term, "a great sin" mean? What excuses did Aaron make? How are his excuses different from Eve's excuses in the Garden of Eden? Did Aaron realize what he had done? Why? Why not?

REFLECT: How do you react when you are caught in a sin? Do you immediately ask for forgiveness? Do you usually appeal your case on the spot? Are you broken by your sin like King David (Psalm 51), or do you just rationalize everything and live with the guilt? Can you live with the punishment? Can you live without it?

The idol was burned, ground into powder, strew upon the water so **the Israelites** were made to **drink it (Exodus 32:20)**. **Moses** turned to **Aaron** for an explanation of what had happened. **His brother's** excuses were as desperate as they were lame, and they did not fool **him**. **Moses said to his brother, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin" (32:21)?** This term, a **great sin**, is used most often in the TaNaKh, in reference to idolatry. However, it is also used of adultery **(Genesis 20:9** and **39:9).** In the ancient Near East it is a legal term for adultery. When it comes to the worship of **God** in the TaNaKh, these two terms, idolatry and adultery are closely related. They are two different sides of the same coin.[674] **He** couldn't believe that **Aaron** would do something like that. **He** had allowed **the people** to get out of control and become a potential laughingstock to **their** enemies.[675] **ADONAI was** so **angry with Aaron** that **He was** ready to kill **him (Deuteronomy 9:20). Great** indeed was his **sin**, but greater still was the mercy that pardoned it.

Just as **Moses** had successfully soothed **God's** wrath, now **Aaron** does the same with **Moses**. **"Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered, "You know how**

prone these people are to evil." Terrific! **Aaron** tried to justify **his** own guilt by placing the blame on **the Israelites. They said to me, "Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him'" (32:22-23).** There was no sign of repentance, only blaming others. So it was at the beginning. When **God** charged Adam with sin he blamed his wife **(Genesis 3:12)**, and when Eve was questioned she blamed the Serpent. No difference here.



Aaron told them, "Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off." Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf (32:34). Was it a miracle? No! A few verses earlier we were told that **Aaron took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf (32:4). He** merely told a lie. The sad part is that not only was it an unbelievable excuse, but that **he** had no idea what **he** had done. **He** not only participated and allowed it to happen, but even when **Moses** had returned and was angry **he** didn't understand what the problem was. "Honest **Moses**, this **golden calf** just followed **me** home!"

It is common in the southern United States for prisoners to help in the building of prisons. That is ironic, because every brick that they lay makes them more imprisoned, and every nail they hammer makes their escape more impossible. In a sense, sin is like that – each sin committed makes it easier to sin again and again and again. And so it was with **Aaron**. After breaking the first two commandments through idolatry, **he** then compounded it with lying and violating the ninth commandment. Therefore, **his** guilt and shame were all the greater. Is it not so with us?[676]