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Please Forgive Their Sin, but if not, Blot Me Out of the Book You have Written

32: 30-35

Please forgive their sin, but if not, blot me out of the book you have written DIG: What is Moses' role in setting things right again? In what sense is he an army general? A prophet? A priest? A sacrificial lamb? What exemplary qualities were evident in his plea-bargaining with God?

REFLECT: Have you ever paid the price for someone's sin at your own expense? You did nothing wrong. But you made it right voluntarily. The cost would be high. The ones you love. Maybe everything you have in this world. Can you imagine yourself doing something like that? How would you feel? How much love would it take?

If there is any one thing that can destroy a marriage, it is adultery. In the TaNaKh, whenever Isra'el went after other **gods**, it was often referred to as adultery, spiritual adultery, such as in the first three chapters of **Hosea**. No matter how strong the marriage, any slip into adultery has dire consequences. Things are no different with **ADONAI** and **His Bride Isra'el**. Because of **the golden calf** incident (**to see link click Gq - The Golden Calf Incident**), **Ha'Shem** had no choice but to show **Isra'el** that there were consequences to **their** spiritual adultery. After all **Exodus 20:5** says that **ADONAI is a jealous God**.

Note here that the husband/wife analogy breaks down somewhat. Bearing in mind that **the Husband** is also the judge of the universe, **God's** just action was to take the lives of all who either participated in the sin or did not want to be **for ADONAI (32:26)**. A human spouse obviously cannot and should not do that. Nevertheless, as a result of their spiritual adultery, about **three thousand people** were killed (see **Gv - And All the Levites Rallied to Moses**), and the rest were struck with **a plague**. Any marriage that suffers from adultery will also have various "plagues" to deal with!

The next day Moses announced **his** intention to **go up** on the mountain **to make atonement** for **the sins** of **the people**. **So Moses went back to ADONAI** and said: **Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods out of gold**. The Hebrew word for **atonement** is *kafar*. As the high priest would enter the

Sanctuary and make atonement for the **people**, **Moses**, once again, climbed the mountain to make atonement for **the Israelites**.

There seems to be two levels of guilt in the making of the golden calf. The *more guilty* party, those directly involved, had been put to death by **the Levites**. The rest of **the Israelites** were apparently also guilty in some sense, otherwise **atonement** would not have been necessary, but **they** were not so guilty as to deserve death along with the three thousand. Perhaps the remaining **Hebrews** were guilty by virtue of the notion of collective guilt, so prevalent in the TaNaKh, or maybe because **they** engaged in the partying to a much lesser extent. However, it is hard to avoid the clear statement by **Moses** that **those who remained** after **the Levites** purge were guilty of having made **gods out of gold**.⁶⁷⁸



In his attempt to make atonement by pleading for the lives of **his people**, **Moses'** argument essentially amounts to, *take me instead*. **He** said: **But now, please forgive their sin - but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written (32:30-32)**. **The book** he is referring to is **the book of life**, or the names of all those who were ever born (**Psalm 69:28; Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 20:15, 21:27**). If a person dies unsaved, **his** or **her** name is blotted out of **the book of life**. Those who are saved have **their** names retained in **the book of life**. What **Moses** is asking is that if **God** would not forgive **the sins of the nation**, would **He** blot **Moses'** name out of **the book of life**, take away **his** salvation rather than **Isra'el's**. **The Lamb's book of life** contains all those who have been born again, and therefore, it is impossible to be blotted out in that **book** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). **Paul's** similar readiness to be separated from **God's** presence forever for the sake of **his Israelite** kinsman was perhaps inspired by **Moses'** remarkably selfless statement.⁶⁷⁹

God replied to Moses by telling **him** that each **sinner** must die for his or her own **sin**. This became an emphasis with the later prophets who ministered during the final years of the southern Kingdom (**Jeremiah 31:30; Ezekiel 18:1-32**). **Moses** was still **God's** choice to **lead the people to the** Promised Land, although **they** continued to be stiff-necked and

stubborn.⁶⁸⁰ To insure **his** success, **God** would send **His Angel before him**. This can only be **Jesus Christ**, or **the Angel of ADONAI**, who appeared to **Moses** at the burning bush (**3:1-6**). Whenever the phrase: **the Angel of ADONAI** is seen in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is always **the Second Person of the Trinity, Yeshua Messiah**.

However, the guilt of **the people** would not be swept under the rug. **God** told **Moses**, **when the time comes for Me to punish, I will punish them for their sin (32:33)**. So a compromise of sorts was reached between **God** and **His servant**. **Moses** would continue to **lead the people to the Promised Land** with **the Angel of ADONAI** going **before** him, but **God** reserved the right to punish later on. And the means **He** used to punish **the people** later on was a **plague**. This was not due to any failure on the part of **Moses**, but rather because of the lack of repentance on the part of **the people**. **And ADONAI struck the people with a plague** (probably hoof-in-mouth disease) **because of what they did with the golden calf Aaron had made (33:34-35)**. Therefore, in the final analysis, **God** held **the people** and **Aaron** mutually responsible for **the golden calf** incident.

Moses' offer to exchange **his** life for the forgiveness of **the sins** of **the Hebrews**, and for the staying of **God's** wrath from coming upon **them**, is rejected by **ADONAI**. **His** life simply could not serve as an atoning sacrifice for **the Hebrews**. Thus **the Israelites** needed to bear the punishment for **their** own **sins**. As believers, that ought to make us extremely thankful for the **sacrifice** of **Christ** on the cross. As **John** says: **This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (First John 4:10)**; he also states: **My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world (First John 2:1-2)**. The point is, that **Jesus Christ** was able to take **His people's sins** upon **Himself**, and therefore, took the punishment for those **sins** by going to the cross and the tomb. **Paul** put it this way: **When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us. He took it away, nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:13-14)**.⁶⁸¹