

- As we learned last week, the Lord has reinforced throughout the ages and with every dispensation that His grace would not be fully realized until Christ
 - The earlier manifestations of His grace served to regular man's relationship with God for a time
 - But none of them were intended as a true solution to man's sin
 - They couldn't address the fundamental problem created by Adam's fall in the Garden, which is the power sin holds over us
 - Sin defines our nature and therefore our behavior
 - Earlier dispensations served to contend with man's sin and mitigate against its effects to a degree
 - But they could not remove sin
 - They regulated man's fellowship with God for a time until the greater revelation of God was made available
 - Therefore, each new dispensation revealed more of the Lord and His plan
 - That plan was culminated in the dispensation of grace in Christ, but until that moment God designed each earlier dispensation to make clear its inadequacy
 - The Lord always demonstrated the weakness of prior dispensations by showing the continuation of sin's power
 - After each new dispensation arrived, the protagonist inevitably succumbed to sin's power, demonstrating that the work of God was still incomplete
 - But when Christ came, that pattern changed
 - Jesus lived a sinless life, showing it had no power over Him
 - Then He died and rose again, conquering the penalty of sin, that is death, thus proving He could be the solution to our sin
 - So in Exodus, we're studying the dispensation of Law and the covenant that brought the Law
 - And therefore we must expect at some point to see the pattern I described re-emerge
 - The arrival of the dispensation of Law must include an example of sin's continuing power over our protagonists, the nation of Israel
 - God must show us that the Law was incapable of addressing the root cause of sin or breaking its power over men
 - The story of Israel at the base of mountain is that account
 - This story shows us the inability of the Law to create righteousness
 - Proving what Paul teaches, that the Law did not come to produce righteousness
 - Because it is weak and worthless in that regard, as Hebrews says
 - So turning back to our story in Chapter 32, Moses has been on the top of the mountain for forty days, and the people below have grown impatient
 - They are being deceived by their own flesh, which is craving for meat and sexual pleasure, leading them into idolatry
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- So they request a new leader to represent God
- The new leader will preside over their sacrificial offerings, which then makes possible the feast that follows, which is what they seek after
 - So Aaron complies and makes an idol and an altar
- The people then celebrate with a feast and debauchery
- As we rejoin the narrative, let's also consider how these circumstances mirror the time in the Garden, when Adam and Woman fell
 - As we noted last week, both scenes begin as relationships based upon a covenant with the Lord
 - In both cases, God provided them with all the food they needed
 - And in both cases, what God provided wasn't good enough
 - Both craved after prohibited things and sinned
 - And as a result, both traded what they had for judgment and exile
- We join Moses is still on the mountain with the Lord, but the Lord warns Moses what to expect when he returns to the camp

[EX. 32:7](#) Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.

[EX. 32:8](#) "They 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!'"

[EX. 32:9](#) The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.

[EX. 32:10](#) "Now 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."

[EX. 32:11](#) Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

[EX. 32:12](#) "Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people.

[EX. 32:13](#) "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it

forever.”

[EX. 32:14](#) So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

- We must imagine that Moses was surprised and very disturbed to hear the news about the people
 - The Lord says that Moses’ people are corrupted
 - Notice the Lord isn’t calling Israel “His” people
 - He is calling them Moses’ people now
 - He says they have turned aside from the Law they agreed to follow, barely forty days after the agreed to observe it
 - Moses hears they have made an idol, worshipped it, and sacrificed to it
 - How disheartening it must have been for Moses to learn this
 - This moment is all the proof we need to know the powerlessness of the Law to produce righteousness
 - The people had been given the Law, they had agreed to it, and it was no doubt fresh on their minds
 - Furthermore, they had experienced remarkable manifestations of the living God
 - Finally, they had first-hand evidence of the Lord’s presence through the manna and the cloud covering the top of the mountain
 - Nevertheless, they quickly decided to follow their flesh instead of obeying the Law
 - We’ve never seen the manifestations these people saw
 - So how could we expect anyone to be sanctified by follow a Law that Israel couldn’t follow for forty days?
 - Clearly the Law does not have the power to put an end to sin much less bring righteousness
- Let’s consider why the Lord chose to share this news with Moses in this way, while they were meeting on the mountain
 - The Lord could have waited for Moses to learn on his own, but the Lord wanted to invite Moses into a conversation now
 - First, we’ve already noted how the Lord pointedly called Israel Moses’ people, not His own people
 - Then in v.9 the Lord declares that the Jewish people are an obstinate people
 - The word obstinate literally translates as the back of the neck
 - God is saying that they are stubborn and stiff-necked
 - The reason God uses the neck as his description of the people is because the neck controls the attitude of the head
 - When the head is submitted, it bows
 - When it is resistant, it remains upright
 - The neck that’s stiff refuses to submit to God’s authority

- These people have not submitted to His authority
- The Lord is leading Moses to a conclusion
 - The people haven't submitted to the Lord's authority
 - They are following Moses, yes, but they aren't following the Lord in the hearts
 - Which is why the Lord called them Moses' people
 - Secondly, Moses knows what it means to resist the Lord's will
 - He saw the effect in Egypt, as the nation was crushed
 - And he saw it in his own life when the Lord sought to take his son's life for Moses' disobedience
 - So Moses knows that the Lord is willing to bring judgment for failure to submit
 - Finally, Moses realizes that something must be done or the people will perish and he is the only one to do it
 - The Lord has allowed Moses to become the hope of Israel in this moment
 - If Moses is willing to intercede, the nation can be spared
- The key to understanding this scene is noticing the Lord says "let Me alone" so the Lord's anger may destroy the people
 - The Lord is testing Moses
 - The Lord has given Moses a opportunity to intercede
 - The Lord prepared to act in judgment over these people, but He is also willing to forgo punishment for the sake of His servant Moses
 - So then Moses responds in the expected manner
 - Instead of leaving God alone as the Lord asked, Moses does the opposite
 - He petitions the Lord to save Israel
 - Moses intercedes for Israel as their representative
- Moses makes his appeal based on three arguments
 - First Moses appeals to God's love and compassion
 - He says these are the people you brought up out of Egypt
 - Moses is implying that the Lord's prior actions demonstrate His care for the nation, and so He can't reject those He has chosen
 - Secondly, Moses appeals to the Lord's name and reputation
 - Should the Lord destroy Israel, then the testimony of the Exodus would be entirely different than it is today
 - Instead of a story of the Lord rescuing His people from slavery, it would be a story of God destroying His people
 - And God enemies could use this to impugn God's character
 - Finally, Moses reminds God of His promises to Abraham

- Moses was descendant of Abraham, so the Lord could have restarted the nation with Moses
- Moses is one of Abraham's descendants himself, no different than the rest of Israel
 - So why would there be any likelihood that Moses' descendants would do any better than the rest of Israel?
 - The problem of sin in Israel isn't going to come to an end just because the nation starts again with Moses
- Then Moses tries to close the deal in v.12 Moses by asking God to change His mind
 - So in v.14, we're told that God responds to Moses' request by agreeing to change His plans
 - This statement commonly cause students some concern, since we know that other scripture tells us that God does not change His mind

[1Sam. 15:29](#) "Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."

- How do we understand what's happening here then?
 - First, remember how this conversation started
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 - The Lord told Moses to "let me alone" and if Moses complied, then the Lord would destroy Israel
 - This was a clear invitation for Moses to intervene and advocate for the sake of Israel
 - The Lord expected Moses to intervene, and he did
 - So clearly the Lord didn't intend to destroy His people
 - God wanted Moses to assume the role of intercessor for Israel
 - Secondly, students of Genesis should notice a striking similarity between this moment and the moment when God visited Abraham before destroying Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18
 - In that situation, the Lord intended to destroy wickedness and gave Abraham a chance to spare the righteous
 - God revealed a plan in advance
 - Abraham interceded for Lot and his family desiring to change God's plan
 - God agreed to Abraham's request
 - But Abraham's intercession confirmed the very thing God intended to do in the first place
 - From Abraham's point of view he thought he had influencing the outcome and changed God's mind
 - Nevertheless, his intercession went according to God's plan, which is why the Lord revealed His plans in advance
 - This moment in Exodus 32 plays out in a similar fashion
 - The Lord invites Moses to act as an intercessor to save Israel from the destruction they deserve
 - But the Lord has no intention of destroying the nation

- Nevertheless, the Lord will punish the guilty for their sin against Him
- And then He intends to bring the penalties required under the covenant against the nation as a whole in a future day
- In the meantime, the Lord is teaching Moses and the people a lesson about both the consequences of sin and the necessity of an intercessor
- So, when we hear that God changed his mind in v.14, it is written from Moses' perspective
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 - From the perspective of man, God appears to have changed His mind
 - But this change was not a true change in God's plan
 - God orchestrated the circumstances by which this supposed "change" would take place
 - God chose the moment to reveal the news to Moses
 - God set the terms when he gave Moses the chance to leave God alone so He could destroy Israel
 - In the end, Moses responded as intended, so God did exactly as He intended
 - From man's point of view, God changed His mind
 - But from God's perspective, everything went as planned
- Through this encounter, the Lord accomplished three things
 - First, the Lord sets the expectation that as the individual Jew goes, so goes the nation under the covenant
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 - The Lord was prepared to wipe out all Israel because of the sins of a few who participated in this debauchery
 - And this is the natural result of a national covenant
 - If any in the nation sin under the agreement, then the entire nation has broken the covenant
 - This principle becomes the basis for the Lord setting the entire nation outside the land in a future day because of the sins of the leaders
 - This is why the entire nation lost opportunity to receive the Messiah when the Pharisee's rejected Jesus, though some Jews accepted Him
 - But this is also why the Bible says the Lord will save all Israel on earth in the last day
 - God will always treat the nation of people who are Israel as a nation because of this covenant
 - Secondly, the Lord prepares Moses to act as His representative
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 - As God's representative, Moses must know God's wrath and intolerance for sin
 - And Moses must be prepared to act as judge when necessary
 - Yet Moses must also maintain a heart of compassion and understanding interceding on behalf of the people when the inevitable sin comes along

- Like the Lord Himself, Moses must judge the people, but he is not called to destroy the people
- Finally, the Lord used Moses to yield a powerful picture of Christ in this exchange
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 - Moses is the representative of God's people before the Lord
 - He must intercede on behalf of the people to save them from God's wrath for sin
 - And because of Moses work, the Lord will not bring His wrath against the people
 - The people deserve destruction, but because of the work of another on their behalf, they can be spared from the wrath of God
 - And the picture works in another way as well
 - Jesus acts as both to intercede and to judge
 - Today, Jesus is serving as our representative to the Father, interceding on our behalf in the face of our sins
 - But in a future day, the Father will assign all judgment to the Son and He will bring judgment against all sin
 - So Moses will fulfill both sides of the picture
 - He will not only intercede to spare Israel, but he also exacts God's justice
 - For though the Lord won't bring all Israel to destruction, He will judge sin
- So now that Moses has been prepared for what to find at the base of the mountain and has interceded for the people, he returns

[EX. 32:15](#) Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one side and the other.

[EX. 32:16](#) The tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets.

[EX. 32:17](#) Now when Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a sound of war in the camp."

[EX. 32:18](#) But he said,
 "It is not the sound of the cry of triumph,
 Nor is it the sound of the cry of defeat;
 But the sound of singing I hear."

[EX. 32:19](#) It came about, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.

- Moses returns carrying the two tablets
 - As we discussed earlier in the study, the tablets were written on front and back in duplicate
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- Each tablet contained a complete set of God's commands
- And they were written by the finger of God
- We also know that angels were involved in the delivery, so it's likely that the angels attended to the preparing of the stones in some way
- But the handwriting was God's
 - The only other time we hear of God's finger writing was when Jesus wrote in the dirt in John 8
 - This has led some to think that Jesus was writing the Law again to make a point
 - I have my own theory, which you can learn in the teaching on the Adulterous Woman in John 8
- As Moses descends, he meets back up with Joshua, who has been enjoying an extended period of alone time on the mountain
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 - Joshua was left here for the same 40 days Moses was above
 - When they meet up, Joshua remarks that the sound in the camp below sounds like war taking place
 - What he probably meant was that sounds of men and women shrieking or crying out sounded like that of men and women dying or in distress
 - But Moses knew better
 - He says it's not triumph or defeat in battle
 - It's singing
- Once Moses gets within sight of the camp, he finds quite a scene
 - First, he saw the calf
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 - This idol was intended to replace Moses and lead the people
 - Ironically, the calf was to stand for God but it actually represented Satan
 - In fact, Baal is a pagan god associated with Satan worship in the form of a bull
 - Next he witnessed dancing
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 - Dancing isn't itself a problem,
 - There is a holy form which is praise to God
 - The problem is when dancing becomes an alcohol-fueled prelude to sexual activity...that's sin
 - A close second would be any type of dancing that I attempt
 - In response to what he saw, Moses reacts in anger
 - • He throws the tablets down on the ground and they break
 - In that instant, Moses created a perfect symbol of the moment

- The people of Israel had broken the ten commandments
- And they had broken the covenant they had made with the Lord
- Moses then takes several steps to correct the situation

[EX. 32:19](#) It came about, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.

[EX. 32:20](#) He took the calf which they had made and burned it with fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it over the surface of the water and made the sons of Israel drink it.

- Moses breaks up the festivities, seizes the calf

 - Then Moses proceeds to destroy the calf
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 - First he burns it
 - Then he ground it into powder
 - Then he scattered the powder on water so that the Israelites drank it
 - This descriptions raises a number of questions
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 - Like how can gold be burned?
 - Why did Moses want the people to drink it?
 - First, the construction of the calf was not pure gold
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 - Back in v.4 the description of Aaron's actions suggest carving took place
 - In Egypt, statues and idols were commonly made of wood and covered in layers of gold, which is probably what Aaron did
 - So the idol could be burned to remove the wood leaving only the gold behind
 - Secondly, the gold slag was ground into powder, presumably through additional laborers Moses enlisted
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 - Moses scattered the gold dust on the Israelites' water supply
 - The water supply at the base of the mountain was a lake formed from the flow of the water from the rock
 - Moses didn't line up the nation to drink the gold
 - He merely scattered the gold over water supply so that every Israelite couldn't help but consume the idol eventually

- The point in this exercise was not as a punishment for Israel nor for atonement
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 - The point was to destroy the idol fully and then pollute it so that it could never be reconstituted
 - Assuming the gold dust could have even be collected and melted down again, it had gone through the digestive tract of the people and become refuse
 - It was unclean now
 - The idol was now poop!
- This same approach to destroying idols is repeated at other times in Israel's history
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 - Josiah did a similar sort of thing with the Asherah idol he removed from the Jerusalem temple in [2 Kings 23:6](#)
 - He ground it to powder and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people
 - Touching graves made something unclean
- With the idol gone, Moses turns to Aaron for an explanation

[EX. 32:21](#) Then Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?"

[EX. 32:22](#) Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil.

[EX. 32:23](#) "For they said to me, 'Make a god for us who will go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'

[EX. 32:24](#) "I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.' So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf."

- Moses begins his inquiry by assuming that Aaron must have been forced to go along with this plan
 - Moses asks what did the people do to you that you would bring such a great sin upon the people?
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 - And this is followed by one of the best (and by "best," I mean worst) excuses in all the Bible
 - In trying to defend himself, Aaron only proceeds to convict himself
- Aaron begins by saying don't be angry with me
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 - Generally speaking, anytime you hear an excuse begin with the phrase "Don't be angry..." you can be sure that when all has been said, you will have good reason to be angry
 - Aaron immediately places the blame on the people
 - Aaron reminds Moses that he knows these people are prone to evil
 - Wouldn't that be the reason Moses left Aaron in charge?

- Then Aaron begins to retell what happened
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 - It's interesting that we have Moses' account in the first part of this chapter given to us already
 - So now we can contrast it with Aaron's own account
 - If Aaron had known Moses was going to be writing all this down later, he might have chosen his words better
 - The differences between what Moses reported and what Aaron reported are readily apparent
 - Aaron says men came to him asking for a god to go before them, since Moses wasn't coming back (true)
 - Aaron says he replied by asking for gold (true)
 - Then he placed the gold in the fire (true)
 - And behold, out popped a calf - a miracle! (silly lie)
- In his retelling, Aaron does everything he can to remove himself from any of decisions
 - Others asked, he participated against his own will and the result was out of his hands
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 - But even Moses' question suggests that Moses saw the situation differently
 - He says how did the people make you give in to such a bad idea?
 - As if to say, "I can't imagine any good reason why you would have voluntarily allowed this to take place."
 - So did they point a knife to your head?
 - Moses expected Aaron to lead Israel away from this situation
 - It reminds us that when the leaders are corrupt or incompetent, the people will always suffer
 - It doesn't require that a leader propose all the bad ideas
 - Bad leadership simply gives opportunity for group sin to emerge
 - The sheep are given shepherds because it's better than allowing sheep to oversee themselves, as this scene demonstrates
- Hebrews teaches us that God expects leaders to give account for the results of those under their charge

[HEB. 13:17](#) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

- The scripture commands us to obey and respect our leaders, because they tasked with watching over our souls
 - Watching over souls means shepherding our spiritual development
 - That is the role of a spiritual leader in the church

- We are to make that job as easy as it can be, because the easier it is for a leader to shepherd us, the more we have opportunity to learn and mature
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 - This truth is predicated on the assumption that our leaders are teaching and leading us in Biblically appropriate ways
 - But in any case, we should make their job easier, not harder
 - But if not, they will give an account (or report) of our souls
 - It seems that our spiritual leaders will have something to say about our compliance with their leadership
 - They will not judge us, but they still get to spend a few minutes on the witness stand
 - What will they say about us?
- Aaron's *coup de gras* was claiming that he played no part in forming the golden calf itself
 - He threw the gold in the fire and magically out came a calf, as if God Himself was responsible for the outcome
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 - His explanation is so absurd, Moses doesn't even dignify it with an answer
 - Clearly Aaron was party to the sin, and Moses left it at that
- Moses gets the last word on Aaron's culpability when he wrote the account of Exodus years later, as we see in the next verse

[EX. 32:25](#) Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control — for Aaron had let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies —

[EX. 32:26](#) then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him.

[EX. 32:27](#) He said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Every man of you put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.'"

[EX. 32:28](#) So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.

- Moses then moves to make an example of the leaders of this rebellion
 - In v.25 we're told Moses saw the people out of control because Aaron allowed them to get this way
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 - The phrase "out of control" is literally the word "unfastened" in Hebrew, referring to the way their clothes had come off
 - But this is not a present tense description

- The text isn't speaking in the present tense
 - The rebellion ended earlier when Moses stopped it
- We could translate this "Because Moses saw the people had been out of control..."
 - So we've moved past the immediate moment of the dancing and whatever else
 - We're now seeing the aftermath, the judgment Moses applied because of the earlier scene he witnessed
- We remember from the earlier part of this chapter that the rebellion was instigated by a group of men within the camp
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 - And these men led the rest of the nation into sin
 - Aaron's fault was in not standing up to these men
 - Perhaps he was intimidated by the number of them
 - So here we see Moses begin with judging the men who committed this sin against the Lord
- Moses begins by asking for men who would stand with him
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 - We might not understand the full sense of Moses' request, but the men in the camp certainly would have understood
 - Moses was asking for volunteers to perform the necessary justice against the men who committed the crime
 - Moses is asking for an impromptu executioners force, and everyone knew this is what Moses wanted
 - In the face of this request, only the tribe of Levi volunteered for the duty, perhaps because they wanted to stand with another member of their tribe
- So the Levites are called upon to kill the 3,000 men who instigated the rebellion in the camp
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 - This required the men kill people they knew
 - The text indicates they found themselves required to kill brothers, friends and neighbors
 - This was a merciless punishment
 - Why does God ask for death in this case?
 - Simply because His word required this penalty
 - Furthermore, the penalty for sin under the Law is death
 - And the nation had yet to see God's justice in their own camp
 - They needed to understand the penalty that sin requires
 - They needed to appreciate the seriousness of the covenant

[EX. 32:29](#) Then Moses said, "Dedicate yourselves today to the LORD — for every man has been against his son and against his brother — in

order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today.”

[EX. 32:30](#) On the next day Moses said to the people, “You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the LORD, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”

[EX. 32:31](#) Then Moses returned to the LORD, and said, “Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves.

[EX. 32:32](#) “But now, if You will, forgive their sin — and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!”

[EX. 32:33](#) The LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

[EX. 32:34](#) “But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin.”

[EX. 32:35](#) Then the LORD smote the people, because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made.

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- The result of the Levi’s obedience opens the door for a restored relationship with the Lord
 - The covenant has been broken, and this cannot be undone
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 - But still the covenant endures and the nation will continue to walk with the Lord
 - And to allowed for restored fellowship, there must be a price paid and an atonement made for the sin
 - In this case, the Lord doesn’t choose to make a substitute available
 - Instead, He requires the life of ever man who led the rebellion
 - They will pay the price for their own sin
 - But there was still the matter of the nation’s relationship with the Lord under the terms of the covenant
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 - How will the nation’s sin under the covenant itself be addressed?
 - So Moses needs to seek the Lord’s forgiveness for the nation
 - He says he hopes that the Lord may be pleased with the removal of the sinners from the camp of Israel and bring a blessing to the people
 - The blessing would be the blessing of continued fellowship in the covenant
 - The next day, Moses tells the people he is going back up the mountain to make his appeal to God
 - When Moses reaches the Lord again, he tells the Lord that You were right
 -
 - Then Moses asks the Lord to forgive the people for their sin under the covenant
 - And if the Lord will not forgive them, Moses asks to be condemned in their place

- He says blot me out of the book of life, which is the book recording the names of the saints
 - Moses would be willing to receive the punishment that God was preparing to give the entire nation
- What makes Moses volunteer to do such a thing?
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 - It seems he has embraced his role of representing the people
 - Evidently, Moses believes his role as intercessor includes taking upon himself the sin of the people
 - But Moses makes a mistake here
 - He assumes that his leadership role and his earnestness is enough to atone for sin
 - He asks God for to forgive the people under the terms of the covenant yet without making a payment for sin
 - Yes, the 3,000 men died, but they merely paid the price for their own sin
 - What about the sin of the nation regarding the terms of the Law?
 - Obviously, Moses is continuing the picture of Jesus we saw earlier
 - Not only is Moses the intercessor for the nation
 - Now he's offering to be a sacrifice in their place, which is the atoning work Jesus did on the cross
- But Moses failed to understand that God is perfect in mercy and justice
 -
 - God can't overlook sin without a suitable payment, or else that would be injustice
 - While Moses offered himself as payment, Moses isn't sinless
 - He can't serve as a substitute for a sinful nation
 - So the Lord rejects Moses' offer
- The says that whoever has sinned against the Lord will not be found in the book of life
 - This is a poetic way of saying they will not have eternal life
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 - This is a general truth of scripture
 - Whoever has sinned against God will suffer the penalty of eternal death
 - There is no getting around that penalty
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 - The only way out is to have someone else pay that penalty
 - But Moses isn't going to be that person
 - He merely pictures that Person
- Finally, the Lord says the nation of Israel not be vindicated from the consequences of this sin
 - The Lord will punish the nation in the day to come

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- Ultimately, that punishment will span generations
- And it will culminate in the judgments of Tribulation
- Remember, the nation as a whole is under condemnation because of breaking the covenant
- And the Lord says that day of reckoning must happen
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- Moses can't stop it with his appeals
- And even the death of the 3,000 doesn't change the terms of the covenant for the nation
- The Lord will continue to lead Israel in the desert for a time, but a day of reckoning will come for the nation
 - That future day of reckoning will be based on the sin of Israel against God under this covenant
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 - That sin began here in this moment
 - But it continued throughout the history of Israel, because the Law couldn't contend with the root problem of sin
- Moses speaks prophetically of this pattern of sin in Israel in his last words to the nation in Deuteronomy
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 - His speech is most of Deut 32,
 - Reading sections of it gives us the overview of how the Lord intends to fulfill His promise to judge Israel

[DEUT. 32:5](#) "They have acted corruptly toward Him,
They are not His children, because of their defect;
But are a perverse and crooked generation.

[DEUT. 32:6](#) "Do you thus repay the LORD,
O foolish and unwise people?
Is not He your Father who has bought you?
He has made you and established you.

[DEUT. 32:16](#) "They made Him jealous with strange gods;
With abominations they provoked Him to anger.

[DEUT. 32:17](#) "They sacrificed to demons who were not God,
To gods whom they have not known,
New gods who came lately,
Whom your fathers did not dread.

[DEUT. 32:18](#) "You neglected the Rock who begot you,
And forgot the God who gave you birth.

[DEUT. 32:19](#) "The LORD saw this, and spurned them

Because of the provocation of His sons and daughters.

[DEUT. 32:20](#) “Then He said, ‘I will hide My face from them,
I will see what their end shall be;

For they are a perverse generation,

Sons in whom is no faithfulness.

[DEUT. 32:21](#) ‘They have made Me jealous with what is not God;

They have provoked Me to anger with their idols.

So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people;

I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,

[DEUT. 32:22](#) For a fire is kindled in My anger,

And burns to the lowest part of Sheol,

And consumes the earth with its yield,

And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.

[DEUT. 32:23](#) ‘I will heap misfortunes on them;

I will use My arrows on them.

[DEUT. 32:26](#) ‘I would have said, “I will cut them to pieces,

I will remove the memory of them from men,”

[DEUT. 32:27](#) Had I not feared the provocation by the enemy,

That their adversaries would misjudge,

That they would say, “ Our hand is triumphant,

And the LORD has not done all this.”

[DEUT. 32:28](#) “For they are a nation lacking in counsel,

And there is no understanding in them.

[DEUT. 32:29](#) “Would that they were wise, that they understood this,

That they would discern their future!

[DEUT. 32:35](#) ‘Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,

In due time their foot will slip;

For the day of their calamity is near,

And the impending things are hastening upon them.’

[DEUT. 32:36](#) “For the LORD will vindicate His people,

And will have compassion on His servants,

When He sees that their strength is gone,

And there is none remaining, bond or free.

[DEUT. 32:43](#) “Rejoice, O nations, with His people;

For He will avenge the blood of His servants,

And will render vengeance on His adversaries,

And will atone for His land and His people.”

- In this day the Lord had taking revenge against the 3,000 guilty, but the offense of breaking His covenant will not be cleared easily
 - In fact Israel will continue to sin against God and the covenant
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 - As a result, Moses says they will be set outside the land, defeated by their enemies and heap misfortunes upon them
 - This is the long term relationship they will experience as punishment for sin
- Just as Adam suffered a long term penalty for breaking the covenant in the garden, so will Israel suffer for this covenant
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 - But this too is part of God's plan to bless Gentiles
 - Because of the Jews' sin, God can be just in setting them aside during the coming of the Messiah
 - Their rejection of the Christ makes available an opportunity for Gentiles to receive the Gospel
 - Yet God remains just in this plan, since He set the terms and they disobeyed