

Israel Breaks the Covenant (c. mid July 1446 BC)

Exodus 31:18–32:35

The Tablets of Testimony

31:18 He gave Moses two tablets of testimony when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, tablets of stone written by the finger of God.

The Golden Calf

32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Get up, make us gods that will go before us. As for this fellow Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him!” [[Acts 7:39–41](#)]

2 So Aaron said to them, “Break off the gold earrings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”

3 So all the people broke off the gold earrings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron.

4 He accepted the gold from them, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molten calf. Then they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.”

5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow will be a feast to the LORD.”

6 So they got up early on the next day and offered up burnt offerings and brought peace offerings, and the people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play. [[1 Cor 10:7](#)]

Yahweh’s Anger and Moses’ Intercession

7 The LORD spoke to Moses: “Go quickly, descend, because your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have acted corruptly.

8 They have quickly turned aside from the way that I commanded them—they have made for themselves a molten calf and have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt.’”

9 Then the LORD said to Moses: “I have seen this people. Look what a stiff-necked people they are!

10 So now, leave me alone so that my anger can burn against them and I can destroy them, and I will make from you a great nation.”

11 But Moses sought the favor of 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?

12 Why should the Egyptians say, ‘For evil he led them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger, and relent of this evil against your people.

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel your servants, to whom you swore by yourself and told them, ‘I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken about I will give to your descendants, and they will inherit it forever.’”

14 Then the LORD relented over the evil that he had said he would do to his people.

Moses Breaks the Tablets of Testimony

15 Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hands. The tablets were written on both sides—they were written on the front and on the back.

16 Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.

17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, “It is the sound of war in the camp!”

18 Moses said, “It is not the sound of those who shout for victory, nor is it the sound of those who cry because they are overcome, but the sound of singing I hear.”

19 When he approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses became extremely angry. He threw the tablets from his hands and broke them to pieces at the bottom of the mountain.

20 He took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire, ground it to powder, poured it out on the water, and made the Israelites drink it.

Moses Confronts Aaron

21 Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you, that you have brought on them so great a sin?”

22 Aaron said, “Do not let your anger burn hot, my lord; you know these people, that they tend to evil.

23 They said to me, ‘Make us gods that will go before us, for as for this fellow Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him.’

24 So I said to them, ‘Whoever has gold, break it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out.”

The Levites Kill the Ringleaders

25 Moses saw that the people were running wild, for Aaron had let them get completely out of control, causing derision from their enemies.

26 So Moses stood at the entrance of the camp and said, “Whoever is for the LORD, come to me.” All the Levites gathered around

him,
 27 and he said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Each man fasten his sword on his side, and go back and forth from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and each one kill his brother, his friend, and his neighbor.’”
 28 The Levites did what Moses ordered, and that day about three thousand men of the people died.
 29 Moses said, “You have been consecrated today for the LORD, for each of you was against his son or against his brother, so he has given a blessing to you today.”

Yahweh’s Punishment

30 The next day Moses said to the people, “You have committed a very serious sin, but now I will go up to the LORD—perhaps I can make atonement on behalf of your sin.”
 31 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Alas, this people has committed a very serious sin, and they have made for themselves gods of gold.
 32 But now, if you will forgive their sin..., but if not, wipe me out from your book that you have written.”
 33 The LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me—that person I will wipe out of my book.
 34 So now go, lead the people to the place I have spoken to you about. See, my angel will go before you. But on the day that I punish, I will indeed punish them for their sin.”
 35 And the LORD sent a plague on the people because they had made the calf—the one Aaron made.

Moses Entreats Yahweh to Go With Israel (c. mid July 1446 BC)

Exodus 33:1–17

Yahweh Refuses to Personally Accompany Israel to Canaan

1 The LORD said to Moses, “Go up from here, you and the people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’
 2 I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.
 3 Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go up among you, for you are a stiff-necked people, and I might destroy you on the way.”

The People Obey Yahweh and Mourn in Genuine Repentance

4 When the people heard this troubling word they mourned; no one put on his ornaments.
 5 For the LORD had said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I went up among you for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments, that I may know what I should do to you.’”
 6 So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments by Mount Horeb.

The Temporary Tabernacle—“Tent of Meeting”

7 Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, at a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. Anyone seeking the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting that was outside the camp.
 8 And when Moses went out to the tent, all the people would get up and stand at the entrance to their tents and watch Moses until he entered the tent.
 9 And whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses.
 10 When all the people would see the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people, each one at the entrance of his own tent, would rise and worship.
 11 The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, the way a person speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his servant, Joshua son of Nun, a young man, did not leave the tent.

Moses Entreats Yahweh to Personally Accompany Israel and Yahweh Agrees

12 Moses said to the LORD, “See, you have been saying to me, ‘Bring this people up,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. But you said, ‘I know you by name, and also you have found favor in my sight.’
 13 Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your way, that I may know you, that I may continue to find favor in your sight. And see that this nation is your people.”
 14 And the LORD said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”
 15 And Moses said to him, “If your presence does not go with us, do not take us up from here.
 16 For how will it be known then that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not by your going with us, so that we will be distinguished, I and your people, from all the people who are on the face of the earth?”
 17 The LORD said to Moses, “I will do this thing also that you have requested, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.”

Yahweh Renews the Covenant (c. late July – August 1446 BC)

Exodus 33:18–34:35

Moses Asks To See Yahweh's Glory

33:18 And Moses said, "Show me your glory."

19 And the LORD said, "I will make all my goodness pass before your face, and I will proclaim the LORD by name before you; I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy." [\[Rom 9:14–15\]](#)

20 But he added, "You cannot see my face, for no one can see me and live."

21 The LORD said, "Here is a place by me; you will station yourself on a rock.

22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and will cover you with my hand while I pass by.

23 Then I will take away my hand, and you will see my back, but my face must not be seen."

Yahweh Takes the Initiative to Renew the Covenant

34:1 The LORD said to Moses, "Cut out two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you smashed.

2 Be prepared in the morning, and go up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and station yourself for me there on the top of the mountain.

3 No one is to come up with you; do not let anyone be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks or the herds may graze in front of that mountain."

4 So Moses cut out two tablets of stone like the first; early in the morning he went up to Mount Sinai, just as the LORD had commanded him, and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone.

Yahweh Passes Before Moses

5 The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the LORD by name.

6 The LORD passed by before him and proclaimed: "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness,

7 keeping loyal love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But he by no means leaves the guilty unpunished, responding to the transgression of fathers by dealing with children and children's children, to the third and fourth generation."

Moses Worships and Repeats His Request for Yahweh's Presence

8 Moses quickly bowed to the ground and worshiped

9 and said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, let my Lord go among us, for we are a stiff-necked people; pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance."

The Renewal of the Covenant

10 He said, "See, I am going to make a covenant before all your people. I will do wonders such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation. All the people among whom you live will see the work of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am doing with you.

11 "Obey what I am commanding you this day. I am going to drive out before you the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

12 Be careful not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it become a snare among you.

13 Rather you must destroy their altars, smash their images, and cut down their Asherah poles.

14 For you must not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

15 Be careful not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone invites you, you will eat from his sacrifice;

16 and you then take his daughters for your sons, and when his daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will make your sons prostitute themselves to their gods as well.

17 You must not make yourselves molten gods.

18 "You must keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you must eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you; do this at the appointed time of the month Abib, for in the month Abib you came out of Egypt.

19 "Every firstborn of the womb belongs to me, even every firstborn of your cattle that is a male, whether ox or sheep.

20 Now the firstling of a donkey you may redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then break its neck. You must redeem all the firstborn of your sons. "No one will appear before me empty-handed.

21 "On six days you may labor, but on the seventh day you must rest; even at the time of plowing and of harvest you are to rest.

22 "You must observe the Feast of Weeks—the firstfruits of the harvest of wheat—and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year.

23 At three times in the year all your men must appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.

24 For I will drive out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one will covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.

25 “You must not offer the blood of my sacrifice with yeast; the sacrifice from the feast of Passover must not remain until the following morning.

26 “The first of the firstfruits of your soil you must bring to the house of the LORD your God. You must not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.”

The Covenant in Writing

27 The LORD said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

28 So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread, and he did not drink water. He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

Moses’ Shining Face

29 Now when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand—when he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.

30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to approach him.

31 But Moses called to them, so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and Moses spoke to them.

32 After this all the Israelites approached, and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai.

33 When Moses finished speaking with them, he would put a veil on his face.

34 But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil until he came out. Then he would come out and tell the Israelites what he had been commanded. [cf. [2 Cor 3:7–18](#)]

35 When the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone, Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with the LORD.

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